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A
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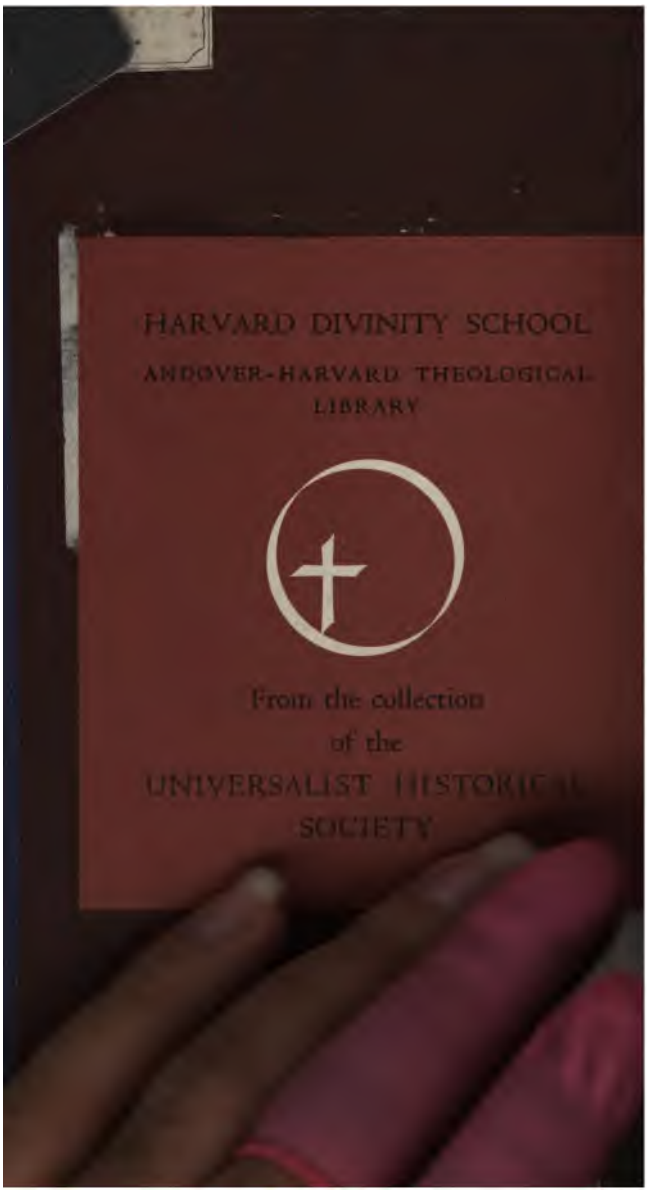
A YEAR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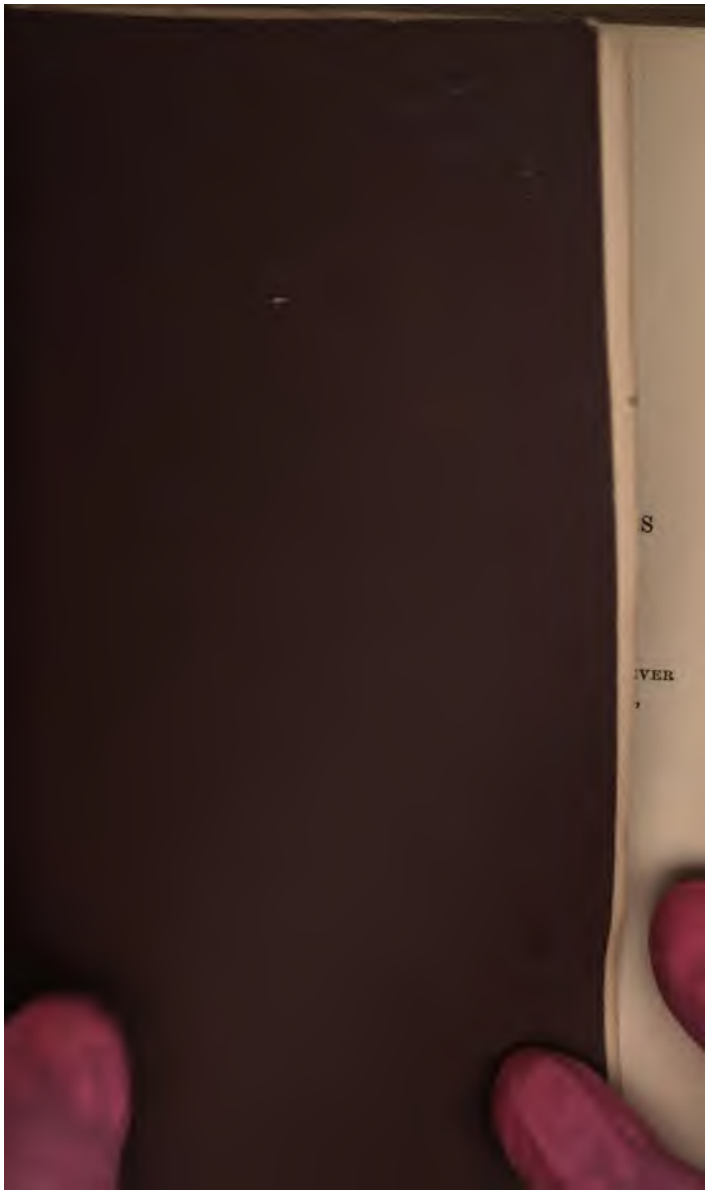

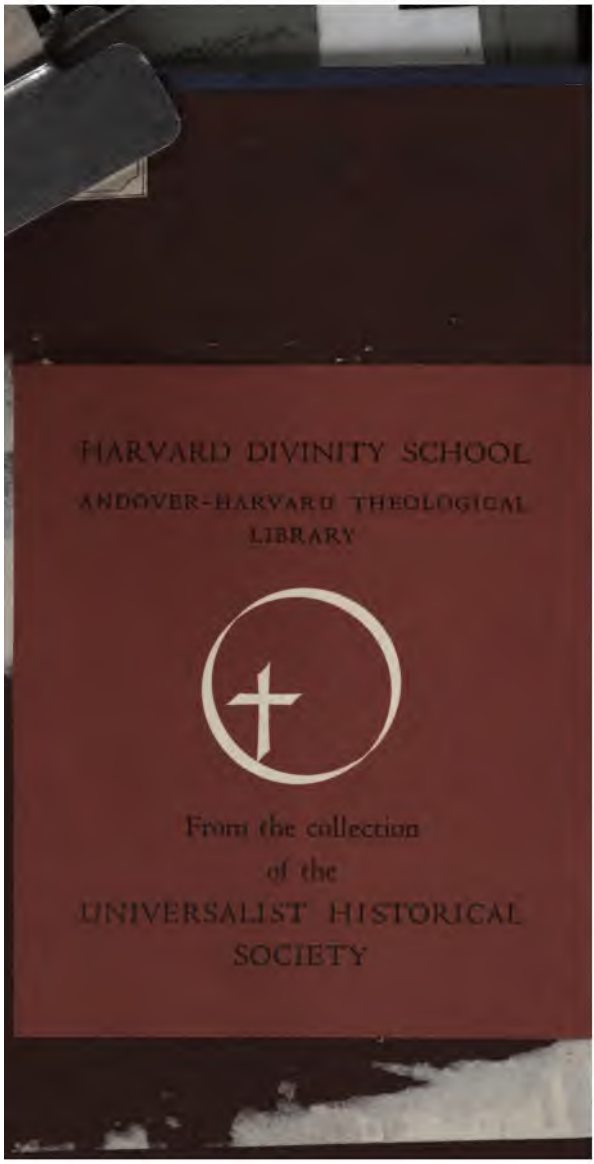
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A Thousand a Year.

By
MRS. E. M. BRUCE.

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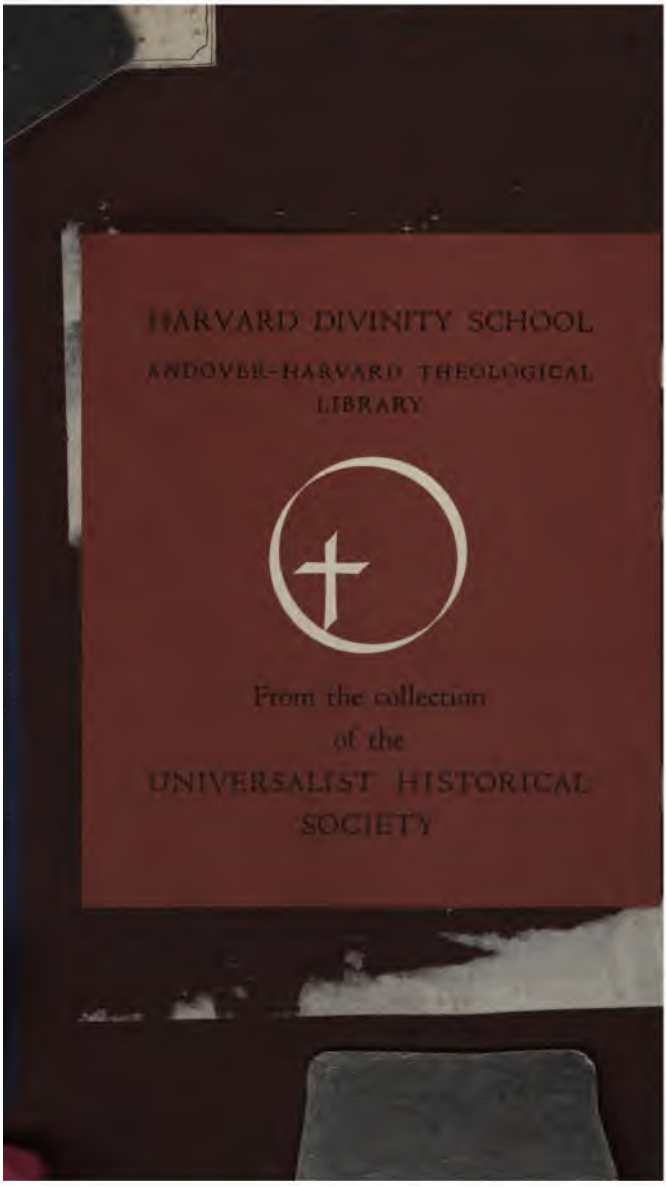
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To the

NOBLE BAND OF CHRISTIAN MINISTERS

BY WHOSE SELF-SACRIFICING TOIL AMERICAN
CIVILIZATION IS SO RAPIDLY ADVANCING, AND

TO THEIR PATIENT WIVES,

WHO TOIL UNCEASINGLY WITH BURDENS THAT ARE NEVER
LIFTED, THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED, BY ONE WHO SEES,
AND WOULD ALLEVIATE THE TRIALS OF
THEIR DISHEARTENING LIFE.

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difficulties, that would conquer less earnest men, gives you a claim to the highest respect of the world.

That you walk, bearing heavy burdens, over the shining mountain of life, and go down into the valley of age without a competence; many of you, like your Master, without where to lay your head; gives you a claim to Heaven's benediction, and to the reward which waiteth in the "Morning Land" for those who suffered here and continued faithful to the end.

A THOUSAND A YEAR.

A THOUSAND A YEAR.

CHAPTER I.

TWENTY years since Nell and I were married, and a long story of patient struggle they have been. The silver hairs have begun to weave their crown of honor round Nell's brow, and I watch them with pleasure, saying to myself, "Tis heaven's benediction given her, for a life well spent."

We have not outgrown our early love in these long years. The friction of our active, struggling life, and the sorrows we have passed together, have kept our hearts warm and tender. The touch of her soft hand works on me all the magic of days gone by. We love the summer twilights; and the mystery of the moonlight has not been solved for our hearts, though many changes have been wrought in our outward circumstances since first we learned how beautiful God's world becomes, to those who truly love.

A simple life ours has been; made up, as every life, of joy and sorrow; not fuller of care, perhaps, than the life of any country clergyman and his family.

We have lengthened our table, and made room in our hearts, and at our hearthstone, for the little ones God has given, and though our salary has not been increased with our increasing expenses, Nell has always managed by her wonderful prudence and skill, to make the year begin, and end, with our reputation standing honorably before the world.

Judge of my surprise, when one winter night as I sat writing at my table, with Nell opposite me engaged in her usual employment, viz: mending the children's clothes, she turned suddenly from her sewing, and burst into tears.

I was astounded. Nell was usually so quiet and patient, that I knew it was no trifle which could bring her tears, and I said tenderly —

"What has happened, Nell?"

"Nothing new," she replied. "But an overdrawn bow must break sometime. I am worn out trying to make something out of nothing. We cannot live any longer in this way."

I was dumb with amazement. I knew that what my patient wife had said, was true. The winter was before us. The last quarter's salary was exhausted, and we had neither food nor

clothing sufficient to make us comfortable till our next money was due.

But what could I do? When I enlisted as a minister of Christ, I resolved to be true to my Master; to do his work, and bear his burdens; be the consequences what they might.

So far, I had kept my resolution, though by the hardest struggle. I had continued in charge of the first pastorate that I took, until it seemed as if I was a part of it, and my work there a part of me. I had thought that I should work on there until my summons came, and go to my rest in the quiet churchyard which stretched away from the church, where my life work had begun, and my life labor been done. I had had several invitations to settle over larger parishes, and the worldly wise looked with surprise on my quiet determination, to remain in my humble field of labor. On the night of which I have written, was my resolution for the first time shaken.

"Nell," said I, "what would you have me do?"

"I don't know," she replied, "which way we *can* turn, but surely we must do something. How are all this winter's bills to be met without money?"

Then she proceeded to show me, item by item, what was going to be absolutely necessary to keep us from suffering, and truly they looked

appalling. While we were thus engaged, our oldest son returning from his work, entered the room and handed me a letter. I opened it, and read —

REV MR. ——

DEAR SIR: We, the Committee of the First Congregational Society of Speedwell, having known you long and favorably, earnestly desire to secure your services as pastor of our church, in the place made vacant by the death of our lamented brother, Rev. —— ——. Our church is in a very prosperous condition. We are united in our desire to receive you as a spiritual leader and guide, and if you decide to accept our invitation, will do all in our power to make your home with us a happy one. Your salary will be $1,000, on which sum you will be able to live here much more comfortably, than in many places on the same amount. Hoping that you may think favorably of our proposition, we are

Very truly yours,
BENJAMIN JONES,
EBEN STONE,
PETER JOHNSON.

When I had finished reading, I passed the letter over to Nell, saying —

"What do you think of this, wife? A mine seems to have opened at our very feet, in the time when we most needed it."

She read the letter carefully, and when she had finished it, looked up with a smile, saying —

"I think that we will go."

These words were few and simple; but coming at such a moment, they moved me. As I have said, I had never thought of changing my place before. But now, without plotting, or previous planning, in a half hour, the quiet of years was broken, and I was like a boat unmoored, ready to drift with the advancing tide.

Our son Thomas sat looking at me all of this time, in mute surprise. At length, not able longer to restrain his curiosity, he asked —

"Are you going away, father? Where?"

"Yes," I replied, "we are going to Speedwell, to try a city pastorate, and a thousand a year; and thus we spoke of it as settled; that we were to leave the old home, hallowed by so many dear associations, and so many cares, and take up the new line of duties, in the new home, which seemed almost a fairy land, with a fabulous amount of comfort in store for us.

A thousand a year! Had we not been living on less than half that sum, and were we not like thirsty invalids long deprived of cold water? Did we not feel, and justly, that the day of relief from our long self-denial would be a happy one.

Do not, dear reader, think that we were foolish enough to dream that Speedwell was Paradise; that, going there, we were to escape all future trials. No, far from it. We had not so foolishly

wasted life's experiences, as not to have learned, that the sunniest summer must have its storms; the happiest lot of life its sorrows; but we felt that there would be relief if we could shift the burden from one shoulder to the other; or, in other words, do and bear new duties, and untried cares, while we rested from the old anxieties and burdens, and took our meals for a twelvemonth, without thinking where the next was to come from.

Let me pass over as lightly, and with as few words as possible, the month which followed the reception of the letter from Speedwell. It was full of heartaches, caused by the sundering of old ties, and the tender regrets of those we left behind.

Many times during that thirty days, were we tempted to say when we saw old men weep, and children cling to us fondly, "We will not go." But ever at such moments appeared the pale, care-worn face of Nell before our eyes, and we said, "For her sake we will make this sacrifice, though for our own comfort, never."

There were great anxieties too attending our preparations for moving. Many a troubled council of the family was called, as the propriety of carrying one and another of the worn-out articles of furniture to our new home suggested itself. At last, we reluctantly concluded to part with

some of them that were most unsightly from age, though they had served us long and faithfully, and seemed to express a mute condemnation of our pride, as we set them aside for sale.

Never shall I forget the trials which attended the day of the sale. When the time appointed was nearly come, I went unobserved into the front room where the rejected articles were stored, to look upon them for the last time, and my heart was appalled with sorrow. There, before me, stood the gathered riches of our happy wedded life. Every article had been purchased by some act of sacrifice on our part, which had rendered it doubly dear; and then by the thousand hours of happy life we had led with them, how they were grown into our hearts. Surely we could not cast them thus carelessly from us. The act seemed traitorous to our holiest instincts. There was the old rocking-chair that had been my grandfather's, and my father's before it came into my possession. How many sorrows in these three struggling generations it had lulled, how many heartaches and anxieties had been soothed by its gentle motion. Should it pass into the hands of strangers? No. My heart repeated, a thousand times, no. How, I asked myself, had we ever consented for a moment, that it should find a place among the rejected articles?

Memory answered the question, by bringing up before me a letter which I had received from one of the committee of my new society, in which he had intimated, as gently perhaps, as a man of the world could, that, as furniture could be bought reasonably at Speedwell, we had better sell what we had, and set up our new house in a style befitting our new situation. That letter had decided the fate of the chair, and drawn its cobweb of pride between me and the sacred past, dimming all its hallowed memories, till I had been brought to say the chair should be sold. But how changed was all the current of my thought in an hour like this. Now, like a mute messenger of humility it stood, rebuking the wicked worldliness that had prompted me to reject it, and whispering to that better nature within me, which recognized the right and the beautiful, not as the world recognizes, but sees the highest type of beauty only in that which makes the heart truly happy. To me, at that moment, a home, either in city or country, could have had no higher adornment than the old arm-chair, and I decided that it should be rescued from the sale, and go with us to our new home.

This question decided, my eye fell next on the cradle which had been ours since the year after our marriage, and which was hallowed in our hearts by some of the most sacred events of our

life. Had we not trusted to its keeping our first-born child, the richest blessing we had ever received from the hand of God? And one after another, as the little ones from the skies came to begin their earth-life with us, had they not found a hospitable home, every one of them, in the old cradle? And then the little one that visited us only for a season, and returned skyward,—did not that spirit take its flight from earth, and breathe its last farewell from out this cradle? Bending over it, we had felt our deepest thankfulness, our holiest trust, and in affliction our best lessons of submission had been learned beside it. Surely it was sacrilege to part with it. My better heart would not consent to such a sacrifice, and the cradle was set in the reserved corner with the chair.

Next, before me lay a carpet, plain, and what the world calls homely. Yet notwithstanding my appreciation of the popular judgment, it was in my eyes a thing of beauty. Perhaps my common sense reader may smile, that I could have found room for sentiment over a rag-carpet, but my heart was full and my eyes wet when I thought of leaving it behind. Every particle of its fabric was hallowed; having once been the garment of some one dear to me. And how many winter evenings had I watched Nell's nimble fingers as

she prepared it for the weaver, while I read aloud to her from some favorite author.

Gladly would I have added this and many other equally prized articles to my list of treasures to be carried. But when my plan was communicated to Nell, she showed me the impossibility, as we were obliged to sell these things to get money for clothing, to make our family presentable among strangers.

Were we not going to have a thousand a year, I argued, and could not this almost fabulous sum enable us to retain our old furniture which had so grown into our hearts, and which at the moment I felt was so necessary to our future happiness.

"Truly," Nell replied, "our future wants would all be well supplied, but these are *present* necessities, and must be met by present supplies.

I knew that her words were true, and striving to substitute hope in my heart for present joy, I yielded to our condition of need, and the furniture was sold.

When the sale took place, it was a comfort to me that my treasures most of them fell into the hands of friends true and tried. I knew they would be loved for our sake, and I was much better reconciled to parting with them, than I could have been, had they fallen into the pos-

session of strangers. Many of them were purchased by a young girl, whose position had been for many months understood by our family as being more than ordinarily near to us. She was an orphan, and the little money that she thus invested in household articles had been earned by her own patient industry.

Did I understand why she thus exchanged the prospect of accumulating interest on her money, for the possession of goods which would lie useless for years, perhaps, before she would need them? If I did not at first, I read my answer in the happy lovelight of her eye when John smiled upon her pretty sacrifice.

There was a long, happy romance wrapped up in her heart which the future was to unravel, but a sunny page of it stole out, and became written history on this last afternoon of our stay in the dear old home.

CHAPTER II.

OUR first month at Speedwell was full of tangled experiences. Strange faces greeted us everywhere. Strange faces on the street, — strange faces at all public assemblies, — but worse than all, the crowd of strange faces that were upturned to us when we looked out on our congregation on the Sabbath.

None, save those having had the experience, can tell what a desolate feeling enters the heart of a pastor when he looks out on an assembly, who are expecting him to lift them away from their worldliness to the region of light and truth, and feels that no links exist between his heart and theirs, by which they may be drawn upward.

There are human beings before him, wanting, waiting, hungering for the bread of life; and he anxious to feed them. But all, both pastor and people, must bide patiently until the angel friend-

ship has folded them close in her arms, and brought their hearts into such near proximity that the magnetic currents of life may play freely through them; then the pastor will understand the people's wants, and they, his words; and there will be no more Sundays of looking into vacant stranger eyes, or delivering a gospel message to stranger hearts.

Our first Sundays at Speedwell we felt like a child striving to gather flowers on desert sands; or like a traveller listening intently for the sound of bird songs on a trackless waste of waters. No flower gladdened our sight, or song our heart, until we had learned where to seek for the one, and listen for the other.

These were our Sunday experiences, and with our memory crowded with the kindly faces and the yearning hearts that we had left behind us, we struggled on, waiting for the time when we might gather our blossoms and listen to our singing birds.

But it is with the week-day experiences of life, that we have in this story more particularly to deal.

When we arrived first at Speedwell, we were received at the house of one of our Committee.

Tenderly and kindly they welcomed us, and we might, and ought to have been, very happy in our reception. But hidden in our garden of

roses lay the same serpent which troubled the peace of Eden, and we were uneasy when we heard his persecuting whispers.

You will remember how simple and unartificial our life had been while dwelling at the little country parsonage. We had almost forgotten the conventionalities and restraints of the fashionable world, which lay outside of our own unpretending circle. Thus when we came to Speedwell, we ran against many a protruding corner of society, and learned some bitter lessons, which, if useful to us, were, to say the least, not very flattering to our vanity.

The family with whom we first tarried, were very wealthy. They worshipped the goddess Fashion, and they never allowed an opportunity to pass, of reminding us of our remissness in this respect.

"Nell" had purchased some new clothing for herself and children, with the proceeds of our furniture sale, and being dressed better than before for a long time, we had hoped that we would not be obliged to make farther outlay at present in this direction. Vain hope, indeed, this proved. Before we had been a week at Speedwell, Mrs. Stebbins announced her intention of giving a party for our benefit, that, as she said, we might meet and become better acquainted with some of the members of our parish.

We thought this proposition very kind at first, and greeted it warmly; but when it proved — as it did in the sequel — to be only a meeting for the display of fashionable costumes, for the flaunting of costly dresses, and the exhibition of sparkling jewels, we would fain have turned from it, and striven for some better opportunity of meeting our people without the vain frippery of fashionable life between our heart and theirs.

How did we contrast this first meeting with *our* disciples, with the life of our Master. In the midst of that gay assembly we paused to think of the solitary Announcer, who, amid the wilds of Galilee, and by its lonely lake, found one by one his faithful followers, and said to them, "Leave all, and follow me."

And this was to be our mission. We, too, had come to a stranger people, to say to them, "Leave all, and follow Christ;" but through what a weight of worldliness must these words pierce before they could reach one listening ear.

But contact with a thoughtless, giddy multitude was not all the discomfort that came to us from this night's entertainment. When the party was fully resolved upon, Mrs. Stebbins said to Nell —

"Of course you will get a new dress for the occasion, and as I am going out this morning to

purchase materials for our dresses, I thought perhaps you would like to go with me."

Nell gave me an appealing look, which Mrs. Stebbins instantly interpreted.

"O," she said, without allowing one word from me, "most certainly your husband is willing. He would be a most unreasonable man to deny his wife a dress which would make her presentable on the evening of her *début* among strangers."

What could I say? I was "most certainly" willing that Nell should indulge in the luxury of a party dress, and under other circumstances I should have readily answered the question; but the manner in which it was put, the implied rebuke in that word "*presentable*" touched a tender spot in my heart. Had we then been dressed in a manner unfit for our position? Were our parish, then, really mortified at our unpresentable appearance? Then certainly we must wake to a consciousness of our obligations in this new relation, and govern ourselves accordingly.

A flood-gate was opened by this simple circumstance, and a tide of events rushed through which made up the story of our City Parish, and the result of our "Thousand a Year."

I was not then conscious, nor have I since learned in what words I framed my affirmative

answer to this question, but it is sufficient for the purposes of my story, that I made my acquiescence to the proposition intelligible; that in a private interview immediately after, I advised Nell to remember that we were living on a thousand a year, and told her that she must be governed by this thought in purchasing an appropriate toilet for the coming party; that she made the purchase as I advised, and that one of the twenty fifties that made up our "thousand" was spent on one evening's entertainment.

In return for this, I had the satisfaction of seeing Nell move amid the crowd of fashionable butterflies, if not as gayly dressed as they, at least not singular for her plainness of attire.

My parish appeared satisfied, and it being for them that the outlay was made, we had every reason to be pleased with the result.

After the party was over, we proceeded to the formidable work of locating ourselves, and making ready for housekeeping. Our choice of a house was to be made between two that were to be immediately vacated, in the vicinity of our church. They were both central, equally convenient to our parish, and every way as far as externals were concerned, seemed equally desirable. There was a difference of one hundred and fifty dollars in the rents, the lesser rent being for a cottage which, though small, was yet

very tastefully and neatly built, and seemed to us a cosey nest wherein we might brood our fledglings securely and comfortably. For this we were to pay one hundred and fifty a year, which we thought reasonable for so pretty and convenient a place.

The other house was larger, much more showy, and, though but three doors removed from the cottage, yet faced on another and more fashionable street. To us the cottage seemed to possess some marked advantages over the more showy house. There was a fine grass-plot back of the cottage, where our children might enjoy themselves unmolested; while the more pretentious house had only sufficient ground for its own use, covering every foot of its enclosure.

Then the larger house would involve the necessity of much greater expense. The rent was three hundred dollars; the rooms were large, and would require a great outlay in furnishing them; and in every respect the expense of keeping up such an establishment would be much greater than the expense of the cottage.

Having looked at the two places, we at once decided in favor of the cottage, and made up our minds to be very happy in this snug little home. But again was repeated to us the experience of the "slip twixt cup and lip." When we returned to tea the evening after our decision was

made, we found a little company of our parishioners, who, by Mrs. Stebbins's request, were to sup with us. While we were at table, the subject of our future residence was introduced, and we mentioned the pretty cottage, and the penchant that both Nell and I had for it. Mrs. Stebbins immediately said —

"Surely, I misunderstand you. You cannot be thinking of that little mouse nest of a cottage over in Locust Street?"

"Why not, Mrs. Stebbins?" queried Nell, innocently.

"Why not, indeed," laughed the fashionable woman with that very peculiar toss of the head which means so much, and utters a whole sentence of contempt without the trouble of speech.

Mrs. Bowen, a gentle, amiable little woman, who had always a kind thought in her heart, and a kind word on her lip for every one who needed them, (and who does not?) seeing Nell's embarrassment, came to her relief by saying —

"I am sure, Mrs Stebbins, I admire the taste of our pastor's family. I have always thought the cottage in Locust Street a very pretty place indeed."

"Yes, it is pretty enough," Mrs. S. replied. "I was not criticising its beauty, but its size. It might answer a very good purpose for a private, retired family, with few friends, of whom

society expects nothing, and on whom it would have no right to make demands. But with a minister's family it is a very different thing. We cannot, of course, allow *them* to crowd themselves into any corner where their dear five hundred friends could not be accommodated as well as themselves."

"Of course," said Nell, "we wish to be hospitable. We would not on any account, carry any other idea to our parish, and we had not thought it possible that we could be thus misunderstood."

Nell's lip quivered as she spoke, and under her drooping lashes I saw the tears start, as dew comes to the earth when the night falls.

I had resolved when the conversation began, that, with true man wisdom, I would keep still and let the women enjoy discussion uninterruptedly; but I could not bear to see Nell crushed thus, like a fly in the grasp of a spider, and I came to her rescue by saying —

"There is still another motive impelling us toward the cottage, that has not yet been mentioned. We admired it, and are free to say that, if left to our own choice, we would have preferred it for a home. But, in addition to this, there is a difference of one hundred and fifty dollars in the rent; and this latter consideration even you, Mrs. Stebbins, will allow is worth our notice."

"No, indeed," she replied with a manner more like a mistress to a slave, than like a person speaking to an equal. "Your latter argument has no weight with me at all. For what reason do we give you a thousand dollars a year, if not that your circumstances may in some manner correspond with our own, and we thus be prevented from mortification when we associate with our minister?"

Again I was dumb with astonishment. I made no reply to the question with my lips, but O, how the secret door of my heart creaked with the pressure of indignant feeling which lay against it, struggling for expression. Was I then merely a tool in the hands of my parish — an addenda to a thousand dollars, which was to be spent for their pleasure, and which was passed through my hands as a matter of convenience to them; or, if it had any reference at all to me, was the same relation as a china toy to a careless child. I might hold it in my hand for a little while, and try to imagine it mine, but it must inevitably return to the hand of my guardian, the moment I displayed an impulse to treat it as if it were really my own.

While I persisted in keeping tightly locked the door of my lips, I busied myself thinking about my Master, and I whispered to my rebellious heart, "Yield not; you can control this

surging passion, for Christ was tempted 'in all points like as you are, and yet without sin.'"

I tried to think of some peace-inspiring word that He had spoken, that would be of use to me in an emergency like this; but nothing would come to me so familiarly as his words of rebuke: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

It will not be unworthy boasting, I am sure, in me to say that for once in my life I was "greater than he that taketh a city." I gave evidence that I ruled my own spirit to a good degree, for with all this provocation, I answered not a word.

Would it please you to know, dear reader, that the day following the one on which this conversation occurred, we rented the pretentious house, in the pretentious street. Being not pleased with either the one or the other ourselves, yet for the sake of pleasing our parish, we accepted the mockery of a home, that was no home, compared to the one we might have made, had we been left to follow the bent of our own impulses.

Thus we turned the second corner of our ex-

perience with the city parish, and three of our ten hundred dollars slipped through our fingers so easily that we could hardly realize that we had ever possessed it. What mattered? we had the *glory* of a city pastorate, and the *name* of receiving "a thousand a year."

CHAPTER III.

ONCE possessed of the fine house, our next experience came in furnishing it. Of course, you do not imagine that having gone through just the trial we had in securing it, we were entirely ignorant of what was expected of us in setting it in order. Nell and I held a little private conference about this matter. We looked over the experience of the previous month, and determined to act in the light of its lessons. We resolved not to offend our people, if it were possible to avoid it, and yet with a common sense look into our future, we said, we will resist as far as possible temptations to go beyond our means. We will try to please our people, and at the same time be just to ourselves. We will be "as wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

With this intent, we began our furnishing. We had, first, all the furniture that we had

brought with us from our old home removed to the new apartments. You will remember that these articles, brought to Speedwell, were the best that the country parsonage afforded. We had thought that they would serve us, as far as they went, a good purpose in adorning and making comfortable our new home.

When the furniture came, it chanced that a half dozen of our parishioners were present. They had dropped in, to see the arrangement of the new house on the inside.

Among them was a Miss Oglesby, a lady who considered herself *au fait* in all matters of taste. She belonged to the middle class of society, who, being neither very rich nor very poor, have enough both of riches and poverty to make them kin to both classes. Such persons, touching both the upper and lower stratum, gather much from both. A fine person, capable of a rich development, will glean a large harvest of thanksgiving from above and below them in such circumstances. They will be thankful, when in contact with the poor, that they are themselves lifted above the pinching necessities of want; and equally thankful when listening to the discontented plaints of the rich, that their joys are not choked and stifled by the cares and troubles and formalities of much wealth.

Ofttimes, in this middling class of society,

the finest characters are ripened and developed. But, on the contrary, we often find persons who weary themselves and the world, with the manifestations of faults which are developed out of these very circumstances. They are fretful and fault-finding because they have not *all* the luxuries that come of large possessions; envious and bitter towards those who do possess them, and never lose an opportunity to make this disposition prominent and apparent to those about them.

Then the poorer classes make them miserable, because holding all the world, as they do, to one standard, they have a haughty feeling of "I am holier than thou," which occupies them in constantly tucking up the hem of their garments, lest the polluting touch of some one below them reach and contaminate it. Such persons make much account of outward appearances. The next thing to *being* rich with them, is *seeming* to be so.

Have I wasted words in describing Miss Oglesby?

Not wholly so. For you who read, are better prepared, with the mantle of charity in your hand, to lay it lightly on the scene which follows.

When our furniture was carried into the house, she followed every artiele with her searching

eye, until it was all deposited in the room that we had chosen, as the centre from which should radiate the confusion of settling.

Then she turned to me, and asked, naively —

"Are these *all* of your household treasures?"

I saw at once the drift of her question. Her tone implied a full knowledge of the fact of our poverty. It seemed to me as if all our past history was written in her question. Yet let me do her justice to state, that it was only my sensitiveness which led me to thus mistake a bare suggestion for positive knowledge. Miss Oglesby had not, up to this moment, pryed into our affairs, and had no positive knowledge whatever of our past poverty.

Was I not rejoiced that I was able to reply to her with the body if not the spirit of truth in my answer: —

"No, indeed. This is by no means all of our household furniture. 'Tis but the remnant of it. We sold the most of what we possessed, thinking it better than the expense and trouble of moving it."

"Ah! you were truly wise," she replied; "and in your selection of articles to bring, you have shown much discrimination. Parlor furniture injures so much in moving, that it was certainly judicious in you to sell your best, and bring your more common furniture with you."

I made no reply. She had drawn her own inference, and whether it was right or wrong for me to do so, I left her in full possession of that field of thought.

Turning to Nell, to see how she was enduring this new inroad on our peace, I discovered the tell-tale tears creeping into her eyes. I feared Miss Oglesby's searching glance might enter the same route of discovery; but I was soon satisfied that it was a groundless fear. She was temporarily lost in her investigations of the furniture.

"Oh," she cried, "how miserably this furniture is defaced. Not one article of it is fit for use until it has been thoroughly renovated. They say 'three moves are as bad as a fire.' I am sure that, in this case, goods have suffered more in a single moving, than any fire could have injured them."

These words were spoken aloud, that the whole company might hear; but in a *sotto voce* I heard her say to Mrs. Stebbins, who stood near her —

"I shouldn't wonder if they had a scratch or two before they started."

Then she appealed to Mr. Brown, who was about leaving: —

"Mr. Brown, won't you be so kind as to call at Mr. Ames's furnishing-store, on your way down

street, and send a man up here to put this furniture in order."

Now Mr. Brown was a very modest man, and the extreme impudence of such a proceeding struck him at once.

"I would be most happy to oblige you," he replied, "if it were the wish of the owners of the furniture to have it renovated; but if you will excuse me for refusing your request, I think I will await orders from headquarters on this subject."

Notwithstanding my mingled emotions of indignation and grief, that such an occurrence could have taken place in the house of a pastor, such an insult being received at the hands of one of his parishioners, from whom we had a right to expect better things, I could not avoid an amused feeling when I watched Miss Oglesby's countenance during that last remark. Evidently feelings of astonishment and resentment struggled in her heart.

Turning to me, when the door had closed, she said —

"Mr. G——, did you ever witness such unparalleled effrontery? Mr. Brown has shown how much of a *gentleman* he is. Well, never mind; there is no evil without some good. You have found out the character of *one* of your parishioners. I guess Mr. B—— will not stand

any higher in your estimation for this ungentlemanly trick."

I made no reply. Silence was a convenient cloak for my feelings at the moment. I suppressed the smile that, covering the face of my spirit, yet left my bodily countenance immobile, and hastened to speak of other things, hoping thus to turn Miss Oglesby from her purpose. But I had not counted on the manner of spirit with which I had to deal. For a moment she seemed stunned by the want of sympathy with her indignant feeling; but presently she rallied again, and returned to the charge like a warrior wounded, yet clinging to the hope of victory.

"Well, Mr. G——, if you have no mind to do me a favor in protecting me from insult in your own house, I will try and show a Christian spirit about it. I will not return evil for evil. I shall go right on and assist you about getting settled, just as if nothing had happened. I will run down myself and see Mr. Ames about renovating the furniture."

What could I say? The item for renovating the furniture was, of course, not to be considered. It would be slight, and probably would have been incurred by ourselves, if it had not been taken in hand by another. But I must confess that my self-esteem was a little touched, and not slightly lessened, at thought of submitting

to such infringement of personal right. But what could I do? A parishioner was before me. I could make an enemy of her by a resentful reply, or I could submit to her impudence, and, by so doing, make my personal well-being and growth in righteousness keep even pace with my prosperity as a Christian minister. I was not long in deciding the question. In my blandest tones I said —

"You shall decide for us in this case, Miss Oglesby. If you think the furniture needs to be improved, we will trust your judgment, and leave the matter entirely in your hands."

And now was she mollified, do you ask me? *Mollified* is a weak word to use in view of the change which came over her the instant I had done speaking. Her countenance brightened like the landscape, when, in an April day, the sunbeams break forth between the rifts of rain-clouds. I not only had not made an enemy, but more than this, I had gained a friend. A troublesome friend it is true, and one destined to make me some after anxiety and heart-ache: but she was still one of my Master's fold, and I owed her a duty which only peaceful relations could help to accomplish. Therefore, when the shock of this little jar became one of my memories, I was thankful that I had controlled my own temper, and made my trivial interests subservient to the interest of my Master.

What am I, that my being either pleased or displeased, happy or sad, should weigh against the accomplishment of His purpose and will, for whom I labor, and whom I strive feebly to serve.

Miss Oglesby drew near me and said in a low, conciliatory tone —

"I see that you did not intend me any wrong in not resenting the insult offered me. Perhaps, Mr. Brown being your parishioner, you couldn't have done any different. Ministers are not allowed, I know, to fire up and say sharp things like other men."

I acknowledged the remark intended for reconciliation with a nod of the head. The circumstances did not call for more. It was a simple truth, very rudely spoken, and was probably forgotten by the bystanders as soon as the sound of the voice had died on their ears; but that single rude sentence became ingrained in my being, and has gone with me ever since, recurring again and again in similar times of trial, "Ministers are not allowed to fire up and say sharp things like other men."

As soon as Miss Oglesby returned from her errand down town, she commenced talking with us about what we would need to buy, and where we would get the best bargains when we made our purchases, &c. &c.

"Now," said she, "I will help you about your purchasing. I am used to shopping, and everybody says I can get things about as cheap as anybody in this town. Now, your parlor carpets, for instance. (You will get tapestry, of course). You would have to pay $1.75 or $2.00 a yard, if you went by yourself for them; I think I can get them for you at a dollar fifty. That, you know, will be quite a saving. I stopped at the carpet-store when I was down town, and I found a very pretty carpet there, that I know you will like. Come, let us go down and see it at once."

Nell looked again appealingly to me. Thinking that I might perhaps delay her purpose, and thus eventually escape her officiousness, I said—

"We have not measured our rooms yet, nor talked together of the quality of carpet we would get for them. I think we will wait awhile before we make our purchases. You know it is never best to be in too great haste, when one can just as well be deliberate."

"But I think you forget the old maxim," she replied, "'Put not off till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day.'"

"No; I don't forget it. But I do not see this matter as you see it. It don't present itself to me that the getting this carpet ought to be done to-day; so I think I will take the liberty to put it off till to-morrow."

"Just as you like," she replied, a little tartly. "I am not going to force a favor upon you, if you don't wish to accept it. I could go with you to-day as well as not, and help you to buy your carpet at a bargain. To-morrow I can't go. But act your own pleasure."

Mrs. Stebbins, who was standing by during this conversation, threw her influence into the balance by saying —

"The measuring of the rooms will of course be done by the carpet-dealer; and as to your decision about the kind of carpet, it seems to me that there can be no hesitation about that. You would not think of putting anything less expensive than tapestry on your parlors, in a house like this."

I replied with a simple negative, and she continued —

"Miss Oglesby speaks nothing more than the truth when she says that she is an excellent hand to make a bargain. If you want to get your carpets cheap, you had better accept her offer, and go with her this afternoon. It will at least do no harm for you to go down to the carpet store, and *look* this afternoon; and then you know, you can purchase at your leisure. Come, we can all stop there on our way down town, and you can have the benefit of our advice. You remember that 'in a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom.'"

What could I say? I was fairly compelled into the trap, which, I have no doubt, had been deliberately set for my unwary feet.

Nell looked submissive, and I tried to feel so; but I must confess that the rebellious blood danced fiercely in my veins. There was no use of farther opposition, so with our host of *pseudo* friends, we went down to the carpet store, and before we left it had purchased a carpet as much beyond our means, as was the house in which it was to be put. Another, that we might have purchased for one third less, would have answered our purpose and suited us equally well; but we had the satisfaction of feeling that our friends were satisfied, and what were we, that we should complain when others were pleased?

After the carpet was decided upon and ordered, Miss Oglesby asked us if we were not satisfied that what she told us was true, that she was an excellent hand to make a bargain.

"Now," she says, "we have done so very well here, don't you wish to buy your parlor furniture while you are about it? We have saved so much on the carpet, that you will feel able to spend more on the rest of your furniture."

How I longed to correct her mistake, and tell her that we had already spent more than we intended to devote to all our furnishing. But I

had not the moral courage to do so, and we allowed ourselves to be drawn along to the furniture-store, and launched into another series of extravagances.

My powers of resistance were roused, and to my credit let it be written, that I made a really vigorous defence before I resigned my will this time to a superior force. Not till Miss Oglesby had exhausted all her powers of persuasion, and tried her offensive weapons of sarcasm, — not till Mrs. Stebbins had given full proof of her skill as a tactician, did I yield an unwilling obedience to their wishes.

When we first went into the store, Mrs. Stebbins was attracted by a very fine mirror, the price of which was fifty dollars. She asked if we liked it, and immediately on being answered in the affirmative, she proposed making us a present of it. We were greatly pleased with this, first, because it was a beautiful mirror, and well worth being joyful over for its own sake; but it became doubly precious to us now, as an expression of kind feeling from one of our parishioners. We had been accustomed to many kindnesses from the tried friends we had left behind us, and our hearts hungered for expressions of good-will in this land of strangers. Now we were simple and unsophisticated enough to think that this present, meant kind feeling simply on the part of the donor.

I suppose you are thinking so too, kind reader; but let me tell you how it terminated. When we would have made selection of a plain set of hair-cloth furniture for our parlor, for which we would have given seventy-five dollars, Mrs. Stebbins replied to us —

"Surely you will not think of putting such cheap furniture as that in company with such a mirror. You must remember that you got your carpet at a bargain, and the mirror has cost you nothing at all. You can well afford one of these fine sets of velvet furniture, and so have your parlor look beautifully, each part harmonizing and appearing suitable for the other parts."

Again, I had no reply to make. Where were all my good resolutions gone? Had I forgotten that Nell and I resolved, when we left home, that we would not be again betrayed into such weakness as we had shown in our selection of a house? No, indeed; these resolutions were not forgotten, but I saw no alternative. Like the kiss of Judas, a seeming act of kindness had betrayed me. I had but to endure my fate, and try to make it a lesson which would help me to wisdom in the future.

To the bill for parlor furnishing, we added as small a bill as we were able to make it for chamber and kitchen furniture; limiting ourselves, and cutting down to an uncomfortable smallness,

what we had intended to make a good, generous list of comforts for the most necessary departments of the household.

We noted it as a remarkable fact that our friends did not interfere in the slightest degree with these purchases. They did not even manifest interest enough to look at the articles as we selected them. What was our inference? Of course it could be nothing other than what afterward proved to be the truth. They were interested in our household in so far as their own personal comfort was inwrought with ours. The parlor was to be the room where they were to be received. It was to be our outer shell, which, alone was to touch the outer surface of the world surrounding us. This room would, at long intervals, and for short spaces of time, add to, or detract from, the pleasure of our friends. Of course we should be generously allowed to share in these moments of ease and happiness; but, for the most part, our lives were to be spent in study and kitchen, where comforts and necessaries would really take from, or add to, our usefulness in life. We had promised ourselves, after our long years of self-denial, a release from the discomfort of living with the bare necessaries of life in these departments. But again we were left with no other honest alternative. We had gone in debt for every article we had purchased

that day, trusting in our ability to save enough from our salary to pay all before the end of the year.

When we had retired to our room on the evening of the day we have just described, we talked our affairs over carefully, and looked our future boldly in the face. What was the result of our investigation? We were already involved in debt, — three hundred dollars for a house, two hundred and fifty dollars for furnishing it, fifty dollars for an evening costume, — leaving us, of our thousand, four hundred dollars with which we were to meet all the remaining expenses of the year.

We had not yet been a month at Speedwell, and these were the circumstances that we were compelled to meet. Did they overwhelm us with discouragement when we contemplated the shadows which lay before us? No; far from it. We had not been long enough used to these discomforts, to have had grooves worn in our spirits by their uneven grating. Human nature is buoyant, and impressible to the ministry of joy. It takes many rough waves of sorrow to wash away a single line of hope in the human heart. We may think it is gone when the first storm breaks over it, but it will appear again and again as our lost memories come back after the waves of time have hidden them for years.

We had it deeply impressed on our minds that there was comfort in a city pastorate and a thousand a year, and we were not to be so soon turned from our belief. Nell, who, as I have before said, had always a heart full of courage, suggested that we should wait longer before we decided on an experiment which was as yet but just begun.

"Certainly," said she, "there must be some equivalent for this great necessity of outlay, in a parish like this. You will perhaps have many weddings that will pay you large fees. Don't you remember hearing Mrs. Stebbins tell one day of a friend of hers, who was married not long since, and the clergymen — for there were two engaged for the ceremony — received, each of them, a hundred-dollar fee? You know eight or ten such weddings, in the course of a year, would make a vast difference with our income."

"Yes," I replied, "I am aware that it would. But such weddings don't come every day. I have been a minister thirty years, and have not had such a wedding in my life, and have never *heard* of more than half a dozen where the parties were as generous."

"I know that," said Nell, "but I am not convinced yet that you may not have such an one, or perhaps many of them, in our new circumstances. You remember that we have not

been in a place where such things could be expected, or often heard of. But things are very much changed with us now, and we have reason, and a right to expect, that with our new circumstances, we shall receive many new accessions to our comfort. You can reasonably expect, too, to receive more from funerals than you have ever done before. I am sure it is since I have been here, that I heard some one tell of a man's dying, and leaving a hundred dollars to be given to the clergyman who attended his funeral. Only think, five or six such funerals would pay all our debts and set us right with the world again."

I could not help smiling at the earnestness with which my poor world-weary wife pressed these calculations. As if by her very hopefulness, she might compel some sunlight into what seemed to me a very gloomy landscape. I have noted the same thing among business men. Sometimes, when a long-continued series of speculations had proved but a repetition of reverses, with what zeal would they press into some new project, as if the very impetus of their hope might push them over the slough of despond, and land them safe in the fields of prosperity, which they were sure were growing green for them in some fair future beyond.

"But," said I, in reply to Nell's suggestion

concerning funerals, "I think very few rich men care enough for the religion of Christ, or its ministers, to remember them with such benefactions, and those who *would* give such testimony of their kindness have not often the means to carry out their good intent."

"Why, I am sure," Nell replied, "you had a great many friends in the place you left who *would* have given you as much as that at either funerals or weddings, if they had had the means to have done so."

"Yes; that is just the point I have been touching," said I.

"But, you don't wait for me to finish before you interrupt me. They had not the means, I know; but isn't it fair to suppose that if you were able to create a feeling of love in the hearts of the parishioners whom you left, so strong that they would, if they could, have done these things for you, you may be able to kindle this same feeling here, which will impel men who are able, and can do you these favors as well as not, to do them?"

"That is pretty good logic, Nell," said I. "I must confess you are reasoning me into some degree of hope, in spite of my gloomy forebodings."

"It isn't treating Providence fairly to despond in the first shadow," she replied; "and I have

not done with my argument yet, by any means. There will be many other sources of income besides those of which I have spoken. The friends here, who seem to be *most* of them moderately wealthy, and some of them with so much wealth that they scarcely know what to do with it, are surely not going to see their minister suffer and be crippled in his usefulness, for want of a few paltry dollars which *they* can so easily supply. We shall have a great many kindnesses here, which will lighten our burdens, I am sure. Only think how many we received in the place we left; and there must be a hundred *dollars* here, for every *cent* in our society there."

"True, every word of it, as regards amounts of money; but my experience has been with the world, to find more generosity, as a general thing, among people of moderate means than among the very rich. Yet I will not throw a chill over your glowing hopes. We may realize all, and more than you expect. It is always well enough to hope. One has then, at least, the pleasure of building his air castle. Anticipated joy is not to be slighted, if we never taste the realization."

"I don't know about that," said Nell. "I can't enjoy disappointment very much. I would rather, for one, never build an 'air castle,' than to build with an almost certainty of feeling it

tumble about my ears when it is done. But I cannot have fears of that kind now. I feel very sure that my hopes this time have foundation. You know what the Committee said in their letter of invitation to you, that 'you could live much more comfortably here on a salary of a thousand dollars, than you could in many other places on the same amount.' Now, what could that have meant, unless there are large, and many, perquisites in connection with the salary here? They certainly could not have been so untruthful as to write you that, if present appearances represent the exact condition of things with the society."

"What you say is the truth, Nell. Present circumstances indicate that the remark you have quoted from my Committee lacked candor. We have been here not quite a month, and more than half our salary is expended; and that through no fault of our own. I am sure we have resisted, as far as was possible, all temptations in this direction; so in looking back upon the past month, we can only say, if this be a specimen of our future, this is a very expensive place to live."

"You mean an expensive place for a *minister's* family," interrupted Nell. "If we had come here in almost any other capacity, we might have set up housekeeping with one half the expense, if our circumstances had demanded it, and no

one would have felt privileged to have said nay. Now, I hold to the great law of compensation. If we have more necessities for expenditure than other people, I am forced to the conclusion that we shall have more means for supplying these necessary expenses. If we belong to our parish, to the degree that present appearances indicate, they will surely care for us when we are in need. You know everybody takes care of their *own* in this world."

"Yes," I replied; "but don't forget, Nell, the old adage, true, though homely, that 'what is everybody's business is nobody's.' Societies are not like private individuals in their dealings. No one is responsible for the support of my family but myself; no one can bring us out safely at the end of the year, unless our own careful economy can do it; and no one will bear the opprobrium if we allow our affairs to get so tangled that we shall labor under the disgrace of debt which we have not the means to pay. Now, all that you have said *may* be true; we *may* have many perquisites, and at the end of the year be very thankful that we came here, and feel that our increased salary was really as great a blessing as it at first seemed to us; but I must confess, I look forward with something of distrust. If this month is a sample of the eleven yet to come, I would rather try the life

we led at the country parsonage. There, it is true, we were pinched and plagued many times, but economy was no rarity with the people among whom we lived, and it was not considered a disgrace for one to live on small means, and, living so, to appear just what in reality they were."

"Oh! don't say so," said Nell. "I am not far enough away from those old troubles yet, to have them attain any sunset glories. I don't *know* what is in the future for us here, it is true, but I can't believe that our circumstances can be worse, pecuniarily, than those we left behind us. We were at the very extremity of our patience there; we certainly can't get farther than that here."

"Why, yes, Nell; our circumstances might get much more unendurable than they were at 'Lyme.' You forget that we had always the kindest and truest of friends there, who rejoiced with us in our joy, and suffered with us in our troubles. It would be much worse, if we had to bear alone all the perplexities that come with straitened circumstances."

"I know it," she replied; "but we have no reason to think that we shall not find good friends here as well as there. We have not been here long enough to know what kindness may be hid away in the hearts of our people. They may

prove to be even more to us than those friends so dear in days gone by."

"True, Nell; they *may*. You are bound, I see, to look on the hopeful side of life. Well, it is better so. I confess that there seems to be an immense weight of worldliness to be overcome here, before we shall get to the true and beautiful; but it may be that we shall at last pierce through this rough, hard shell, and find the meat of the nut sweet and good underneath. We will at least hope for the best."

"That is spoken like the good, true Christian that you are," she replied. "It is a part of our work, as Christian disciples, to look on the bright side of every picture; to find the silver lining of every cloud, if we can; and, above all, to look at the best side of human nature, and believe in its possibilities for good. I remember a friend once said to me, and I have never forgotten the remark, 'Do not forget, amid the disappointments and betrayals which you will be compelled to meet in a world like this, that human nature, poor and weak as it is, is yet the work of God, and, like everything that he has created, has much more of the true and beautiful than of evil in its composition. So, whatever else of sorrow or uncertainty may come to you in this life, keep your trust in humanity undimmed. Make it next to your belief in God,

and as you would not dare to wander in the wilderness of life without your hand close clasped in that of your heavenly Father, so do not consent to making your heart a desert, because you will not accept the springs of joy which will refresh it on every side, if you will permit their healing waters to touch you.' Having always remembered this injunction, I have been helped by it many times in hours of trial, and lifted by it, often, into regions of light, when otherwise I must have grovelled in darkness, and stifled amid the damps and vapors which befog this lower world."

"That is quite a sermon, Nell; perhaps I will preach it to my people, sometime."

"You will have to learn it yourself, fully, first," said she, laughing merrily. "People never have success teaching what they do not fully know themselves."

"I acknowledge it," said I; and thus pleasantly closed a conversation which was not allowed to be forgotten, by reason of its frequent after renewal.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER many tribulations, and some stretching of the patience, which tried the strength of the will holding it, we at last were settled in "our own hired house."

It would be idle for me to deny that we felt some pride in the appearance of our parlor, when it was furnished. If Miss Oglesby could not be said to have displayed very good taste in her interference with our affairs, she had certainly not proved herself destitute of taste in her selection of articles for our furnishing. There was a very pretty harmony in the colors of carpet and furniture. The things that were destined to keep close companionship for months, and perhaps for years, had the satisfaction of at least being on good terms to begin with. There was no jarring discord between them, to make them and their owners unspeakably uneasy in the commencement of their intercourse.

And here let me pause to remark that one of the reforms most needed by the world, is a change in the careless, indiscriminate manner in which houses are furnished. Too little thought has been given to this subject.. True, here and there we find a house neatly and tastefully adorned; but in the majority of our homes the furnishings seem to have fallen together by some helter-skelter accident, rather than to have been selected with any reference to one another.

You, common-sense reader, may smile at this interlude, in the midst of a practical story, and at my words when I speak of this "as one of the reforms." But I will not abate one jot or tittle from the force of my remark. I do most honestly believe that homes would be happier, that children would be better, and that all would be helped to a higher plane of existence, if we could be constantly surrounded by beauty instead of deformity.

Parents hoard up their money, and strive by careful saving to be able to take their families to some place of summer resort, where they may sun themselves for a little season amid the beauties of the outer world.

All well. I would not in the least degree detract from these pleasures. None more than I worship at the shrine of beauty amid the mountains. None beside Niagara's rushing waters

are more willing to wonder and adore; none can enjoy more in that deep Cave, whose weird, dim recesses have taught thousands to appreciate the skill of the All-wise. I would say to all parents, go, — take your children, and learn these lessons that shall make you wise and happy, — but, having done these things, do not leave the others undone. Because you are happy and profited one month of the twelve, do not therefore starve yourselves, and crush that hungry longing for beauty, which asks for satisfaction during the remainder of the year.

This is too much like the principle which prompts parents to send children to Sunday-school to be taught of the loving nature of God and Christ, and the mild doctrines of the New Testament, during one hour of the week, and then to subject them to be witnesses of constant scenes of violence and unchristian bickerings for the remaining hundred and sixty-seven hours.

Make your houses beautiful, — harmoniously so; let the eye and the heart rest contentedly amid the joys of home. Then will there be less wanderings from your Edens of love, and the by-paths of sin shall get fewer denizens.

But let me return to my narration, lest you think me forgetful of my work, and carelessly wandering from a story, to a discourse.

When our house was understood as ready to

receive guests, we were in no lack for them. Our parishioners were exceedingly anxious to see *us* in our new home, and I must be allowed to think that a slight touch of curiosity to witness our surroundings, mingled with the goodwill for the occupants of the house. However that was, our visitors were not more abundant than welcome. We were exceedingly glad to see them, hoping to strengthen the links of love between their hearts and ours by every interview, and thus facilitate our work in their midst. They seemed equally glad to see us, and, as a general thing, were much pleased with our circumstances. There were one or two exceptions to this general spirit of content. In one case an old lady called on us, who, though herself in possession of a large fortune, was yet so miserly, that she never expended one cent more than was actually necessary for her subsistence. On entering our parlors she seemed to be overcome with amazement. She stood motionless, as if she were turned to stone.

Having heard of her before, I comprehended at a glance what was the source of her discomfort, so I quietly seated myself and awaited the denouement. After a moment of most uncomfortable silence, the old lady drew a heavy breath, as if stifled by the atmosphere of luxury, and said, gaspingly —

"I didn't think it of you. Wasn't your Master born in a stable?"

"Yes," I replied, mildly, "He was *born* in a stable, but I have yet to learn that this circumstance came about through any preference of his own, or that he remained there very long after the event took place."

She could not resist a smile at this reply, but in a moment she rallied and returned to the onset.

"But you must admit that he never furnished such a residence as this, — never lived on tapestry carpets, or took his ease in velvet arm-chairs. How will you face these facts?"

"Let us see," I replied. "Where in the New Testament do you find record of the fact that tapestry carpets and velvet chairs were known in those days?"

"I don't know that there is just precisely that record, but I am not willing that you should dodge the question that way. If they didn't have *just* the articles that I mentioned, there were palaces, and king's houses, and I haven't any doubt in my mind but what there were nice things in 'em."

"Most certainly there were; but, as I understand Scripture, Christ's work did not consist of ministering solely, or to any great degree, to these people who lived in king's houses. It was

the 'common people who heard him gladly.' Undoubtedly he lived as well as the people among whom he labored. I have no doubt but what he wore the dress customary among the Jewish people; accepted their fashions, and adopted their rules of life, so far as they were consistent with the work which he came to do.

"Now I do nothing more, in adopting my present style of furnishing. I could have been as well satisfied with cheaper materials, provided they had been neat, harmonious, and comfortable; but my parishioners could not be thus satisfied. Like Paul, 'I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.' I am not above doing the most humble duties, and living in the most humble way; and if my circumstances demanded it, I should most gladly do so."

"I can't understand your logic," said the old lady; "these new-fangled notions don't suit me at all. Young folks nowadays turns everything, even the good old Bible, to suit themselves. Now I was always taught, and I believe it is the truth, that Christ lived humble because he had humility in his heart, and he wanted to show the world that in possessing the higher riches, he could afford to do without the lower."

The conversation was ended. I had no reply to make with my lips, but my heart rose up and

said, "You are right, good friend, in this part of your argument; though wrong in preaching a sermon to me on my dear-bought semblance of riches, when you have been all your life, body and soul, devoted to laying up wealth."

After my guest was gone, I thought long and earnestly on this subject. I tried to search my heart, and see what feeling predominated there with reference to my new-found treasures. My thoughts ran somewhat on this wise: Here is the appearance of wealth. Does it fit or unfit me for the work of my Master? Does it remove me farther from, or bring me nearer to the people of my charge? Does it increase or diminish Christian worth in my own heart?

These questions it was not possible for me to answer in an hour. Their response came, in the after months experiences. I listened to it with profit, and if my reader desires the secret, he shall come in possession of it by patiently following my story.

One day, not long after the event of which I have just written, the older members of our family were assembled in our parlor, and several of the most *elite* of our friends were calling upon us, when we were suddenly startled by a great outcry of joy in the hall. Evidently some happy surprise had come to the hearts of our younger children. I rose to see what it might be, and

passing a window, on my way to the hall, I discovered a stage standing at the door. Just descending from it, was one of our dearest country parishioners. A face whose presence had never before given me aught but unmingled joy was before me. A sweet countenance, beaming with love for us all, waited at my door for welcome. Shall I confess the truth? My heart sank within me when I looked upon it.

I would not blame you, reader mine, if you should close the book at this juncture, and refuse to cultivate farther the acquaintance of one seemingly so fickle and faithless as a friend.

But I beg you relent a little. Be not over hasty in your judgment, until you shall have heard my plea. I did not live to myself; every hour of my stay at Speedwell had been impressing the fact on my mind that I was losing my personality; that in taking up this new connection I was some way merging my individuality into the great mass of humanity, which in those first few months seemed clinging to me like parasites to an oak. Do not imagine that I remained long subject to this foolish fallacy. Like one suddenly plunged into deep water, I floundered, I strangled, I sank and rose again, before I bethought me to strike out boldly and endeavor to stem the adverse current.

I had never had just this experience with life

before. It took me some weeks to equipoise myself, to understand my true relation, to know just how much I belonged to God and to myself, and how little I was responsible to the people surrounding me for the trivial acts of my life.

But let me not leave my guest standing over long upon the threshold. I will introduce her to you, dear reader, and afterward, mayhap, to our friends within. She was young, — not out of the sweet spring-time of girlhood. Living always in the country, and being finely moulded in harmony with its beauty, her cheeks had caught the blush of the roses, and her breath the fragrance of the lilies.

Novelists usually say "a girl of eighteen summers," when they would describe that period of life; thus counting age by the sunny corners their heroines may have turned; and often I have wondered whether it might not be more appropriately counted by life's rougher angles. Whether I be right or wrong in this suggestion, I shall at least venture on this iconoclasm for two reasons: First, not being a novelist, I have no reputation to lose, if critics should take the liberty to say that I had departed from proper rules of expression. But my second and more weighty reason is, the life to which I have been referring had little sunshine in its past to tempt the narrator, so that the word summer, in connection with it,

would have little meaning; while were I to represent its disappointments and sorrow by the synoym winter, my word would have signification, and I should have expressed, to my own satisfaction at least, the truth with reference to the life in question.

So dear reader, with your consent, or without it, as the case may be, I shall take the liberty of saying that the gentle Katie Lee, whose face appeared at my door that July afternoon, had seen eighteen winters. Now, I know you are beginning to imagine a spirit chilled, and a heart made morose and gloomy by the adverse storms of life. You were never more mistaken. Did I not tell you that her cheeks bore the blush of the roses, and her breath the purity of the lilies? This could not have been, had she not possessed a nature which, like the diamond, could gather to itself every ray of light when enveloped in dense clouds of shadow.

Hope in her heart was like a fair arbutus which, amid chilling snows, dares to bud, and trust God for the sunshine to perfect its blossoms. I remember her saying to me one day when we were comparing the respective amounts of joy and sorrow in life, "I believe we should count it all joy. The flowers grow, even in the severest storms. Why should we accept God's providences less willingly than they?" Her

life had been thus far a fit exemplification of her words. She had ripened rich fruits of cheerfulness and peace from what the world would have called adverse circumstances.

She was left an orphan in the helpless years of her childhood, both mother and father being taken from her, before she was able to appreciate their love and protection. Thus she never had a father's strong arm on which to lean, or learned from a mother's patient endurance, how to "suffer and be still."

It had fallen to her lot to be nursed and cared for by a maiden aunt, whose chief idea of rearing children was to feed them until they attained their growth, and teach them to work, so that they should be able to earn a livelihood for themselves. These two things she had accomplished for Katie, and very fortunately for her too, as she was again deprived of a protector and friend by the death of this aunt while she was yet in tender girlhood.

From that time onward, she had struggled in the battle of life, not single-handed and alone, but with the weight of two younger brothers, who relied on her for care and support. She had at first earned a bare subsistence for herself and the two hungry little mouths which were ever open for her to fill, by working in a factory. But afterward she attained the dignity of teacher

in a public school, and from that time forward the path she trod, though still difficult and thorny, was more congenial to her spirit, and thus less difficult to her feet.

She still lived with the closest economy, that she might be able to educate and prepare her brothers for the active work of life. Though her clothing was always neat and clean, yet in its coarseness of texture and threadbare age, it verged often, almost on shabbiness.

We had known her from her childhood, had watched her struggles with tender interest, and never before had we felt aught for her but unqualified love and admiration. The affection that we had felt for her, was like the love that we bore our own children, and if it were not for whispering a secret abroad, which we have already hinted, we might tell you, dear reader, that we had been led to expect that she might at some future time, — when our son John became able to share her burdens, or perhaps lift them entirely from her shoulders, — stand in the relation to us of a daughter. You had been introduced to her before, through the narration of *one* of the many acts of kindness which had endeared her so strongly to our hearts.

Such was the person who stood before me; such was the relation in which she stood to our family, and yet I return to the humiliating con-

fession, which my heart made when I first became aware that she was in Speedwell: I wished that she was back again in Lyme.

Of course there was a reason for this wish. The party within was my explanation. They were proud, worldly people, who cared for nothing but external appearance, who would recognize nothing in a stranger, but the fashion and material of the dress she wore. The day had been exceedingly dusty, and Katie's dress, which in the morning, might at least have had the advantage of being neat, was now, after her long stage-ride, travel-soiled and mussed. Her cheeks had temporarily lost their roses, through the weariness of the day, and her complexion, which was ordinarily very fair, had changed by reason of the heat and dust to a muddy brunette.

Such was the appearance of the lady that circumstances compelled me to introduce to the *elite* of Speedwell, as an old friend and parishioner, — "Miss Katie Lee."

Though I tried as much as possible to conceal my chagrin, there must have been in my manner some hint of the tumult within, for Katie caught a hint of it, I know, by the suddenly embarrassed manner which rapidly increased as she advanced and was presented to our guests. Had I have been calm and self-possessed, I am sure the whole scene would have passed more pleasantly.

Katie, had she had perfect confidence in the sincerity of my welcome, would have felt that she had a rock of refuge in the hearts present who knew her. She could have preserved her equilibrium in spite of the scorn of strangers, could she but have relied on the sympathy of friends. As it was, she was thrust into new circumstances, with the unpitying eye of critics upon her, and no friendly hand to intervene for her preservation.

To her great credit, let it be written, that she passed the ordeal like the genuine true woman that she was. I have never in my whole experience with life, seen any one of her age hold disagreeable circumstances at bay more successfully, than did she during those moments of presentation. Though her manner was embarrassed, and she manifested a conscious surprise at meeting unexpectedly persons who in appearance belonged to a higher grade of life than that to which she was accustomed, yet she bore herself as only queenly spirits like hers can do amid the rough currents of life.

The ladies to whom she was presented, touched her hand very gingerly with their delicate kids, while they expressed in every motion, and every varying shade of countenance, the surprise they felt at sight of her unpromising *personelle*. The gentlemen, on the contrary, received her with a

show of cordiality. And here let me say, for the credit of the sex, the behavior of the gentlemen who were my guests at this time, was not peculiar or unprecedented. I believe it is characteristic of men, to be more lenient in their judgment of women, than are critics of their own sex.

Why is this? Can any one oblige me by answering the question? Is it because they stand on a firmer footing in society, and thus take the privilege of their vantage ground, to draw up those upon whom women look down with contempt? Or, have they more benevolence of heart, prompting them to risk the contumely which the world holds ready to pour on those who persistently cross her rules of expediency in this respect?

I have not yet solved the question to my satisfaction, so I am compelled to leave it to my readers, that each may give to it the solution which best suits his or her fancy. But I entreat you to consider that I have not raised the question without a purpose. If women acknowledge my statement, that they are unduly selfish in their treatment of those of their own sex who from any accident of birth and circumstances are below them in station, let them at once set about correcting the tendency, and they will find with the effort, a new joy and a sufficient reward.

Among the young gentlemen present was a Mr. Kimble, who, by position of birth, and circumstances of culture, had been accepted as a leader in the fashionable world. He at once relieved Katie's embarrassment by rising and offering her a seat which, being in a sheltered corner, removed her in a measure from the rude criticism to which she must have been otherwise subjected. From this nook Nell soon contrived to make an easy exit for her to a dressing-room, and thus were we all relieved of a trivial though painful embarrassment. When she had left the room, questions were freely asked as to her age, parentage, relation to us, and all the variety of impudences which society allows in these directions.

When curiosity was satiated, our friends took their leave before Katie's reappearance; so we were allowed the privilege of spending the first evening of her visit alone with her, talking of the good old times and the dear old friends we had left, but a few months before, it is true; and yet, so artificial had been our life, that it seemed as if it must have been a year since we bade adieu to the country parsonage. 'Tis strange what leaden wings time has, when all the interstices of the hours are filled with the conventionalities of an artificial life.

Katie's coming was the first relief that we had

experienced from this restraint, since we came to Speedwell, save when we had been alone in our family circle. Now, as the twilight shadows deepened, our little group seemed magnetically welded in spirit, and in our freedom and joy we felt at peace with one another, and with all the world. The weight of heavy care seemed lifted from our hearts, and the consecrated breath of peace crept in, to reconcile us yet to life.

You may wonder, that one, added to our always harmonious circle, could have wrought such a change in our feelings. You will most certainly express surprise, if you have not had a like experience. But to many who will read this page, my words will not be strange.

Have those of you who dwell in close and crowded cities, never had a friend come to you from the country, who seemed to open the gates that had before shut out from your vision the beautiful hills, so that all at once your life was flooded with the fragrance of the meadows, and the breath of the valleys came to you like a blessed benediction?

Such was Katie to us that night. Her free, joyous, trusting spirit overspread our care-burdened souls with sunlight. While we sat together, and listened to her cheerful chat and merry laugh, we denied entrance to all thoughts of the morrow. We tried to forget that there

were cares and mortifications yet in store for us in the future. We even shut the eyes of our memory to the fact, that so little time before we had blushed to own and introduce the very person who was now the source of our happiness.

Such is humanity. I am chagrined to make the confession of my weakness, but should blush much more if I were not writing this confession to be read by mortals like myself, who, by reason of similar weakness, should know, at least, how to pity and forgive.

Our evening, pleasant as it was, like all our earthly pleasures, vanished into night. We were overcome at last by humanity's weakness, — desire for sleep, — and our pleasant company separated, not again to resume the happy abandon of that evening for many long months.

What do I mean by this? Not indeed that Katie left us with the following morning, or that our hearts were changed toward her when we had slept and woke again. No; neither she nor we changed with the changing day, but our circumstances were not again the same. Counteracting influences broke up the magnetic currents of our joy, and from that day, through every day of her visit, we seemed to go farther and farther from one another.

Need I go over in minute detail the humiliating circumstances of the week? I call them hu-

miliating, because now, in looking back on them, I see so much in my own conduct of which a true heart ought to be thoroughly ashamed. I was mortified in my own house, whenever company was present, and that was nearly all of the time. I was abashed on the street, at church, in all public places of assembly, because I had ever with me the consciousness that our party was the subject of remark.

Nell was a diplomatist, and she tried the exercise of her ingenuity to metamorphose, in some degree, the outward appearance of our visitor.

Can you believe that, in the little time that we had lived at Speedwell, we could have so learned the customs of fashionable life, and become so bound to them, that we dared not brave their follies? It seems a mystery to me that, having been so mortified by Mrs. Stebbins, a few short weeks before, my own gentle Nell could have so soon consented to occupy the same disagreeable place. But let me say, in her defence, that the means she took to bring about the desired end, were more Christian, and much less abrupt and unkind.

Katie came to us on Thursday. The next day, Friday, was very warm, and we made that an excuse for not going on the street until the twilight of the evening gave us a veil, as well as a cover from the heat. Katie was contented to

remain at home with us, never suspecting us of any design other than the reason that we gave. Then we took a long walk, and being very tired on our return, the younger members of the family and our guest retired early.

Nell and I were left alone, and she embraced the opportunity to unfold to me a plan that she had been revolving in her mind.

"Don't you think, husband," she said, "that we can afford to make Katie a present? She has always been very kind to us, you know."

"Why, certainly, Nell," I replied; "you can make her a present if you like. Why did you ask me such a question?"

"I didn't know as you would think we could afford to make presents, when we have had to run in debt so much lately; but really, I did want very much to make this present."

"Why, Nell," said I, "you have forgotten *so* soon that we have 'a thousand a year.' Can't we afford to make some presents, and pay our debts, too, with that amount?"

"Why, yes," she replied; "I think we ought to be able to; but I thought I would ask you, and see what you said about it."

"Spoken like the good wife that you are. I am in a very good-natured, hopeful mood just now, and I think we can afford to make Katie any present that is within reason. Of course, I

do not presume that we are able to buy her a house, even if she and John were ready to occupy it; but any present within the compass of our means, I think we may safely bestow upon her. Now what do you propose to give?"

"I have not been able fully to decide. That was one thing that I wanted to consult you about. We will give her either a bonnet, or a shawl; which do you think she needs most?"

Now I confess I was desperately puzzled by this question. I had only observed Katie's dress with a man's eye. I had the impression that there was a good deal needed to bring it up to the standard of the society into which this unfortunate visit had thrust her. But my observations had been very desultory. If I had been forced to express an opinion with reference to Katie's wardrobe, I could only have answered that it impressed me as having "a general flavor of mild decay," yet I could not particularize any one article of her dress from which I derived this impression.

When I was thus unexpectedly called on for an opinion, which would be the most appropriate gift for her, a bonnet or a shawl, I was utterly nonplussed. My first impulse was to plunge boldly in, and say that I thought a bonnet was most needed. Then I reflected, that if it should happen to be the case that Katie's bonnet

was much better than the shawl she was wearing, I should be in disgrace for my want of attention. So I hesitated. A moment longer, and the lucky thought came just in time to save me from the humiliating confession that, man-like, I could not tell size, color, texture, or condition of either bonnet or shawl?

"Why not give her both?" I asked with the air of a most generous, instead of a most puzzlingly confounded man.

"I would be delighted to," said Nell, "if you think we can afford it. She has a very tolerable black silk dress, you know, and with a new bonnet and a shawl, which would hide the old style in which the dress is made, she will be very presentable at church next Sunday."

Presentable! The very word that Mrs. Stebbins had used with reference to Nell, but a few short months before. But then it was different, entirely different. It was used then before the face of the victim. The tone employed was contemptuous, and implied reproof. Nell's feelings had been bitterly and intentionally hurt by the use of the word; whereas *her* use of it meant kindness and meritorious attempt to save a friend from bitter criticism.

The decision was made. Both shawl and bonnet were to be purchased, and as the morrow was Saturday, it was agreed that the purchases

should be made, and the presents given, so that they might make their first appearance on the Sunday following.

Nell was not a laggard about such duty. Having once put her hand to the plough, she was not one to turn back. The next morning she went out for her marketing, and made it in her way to visit the dry goods and milliners' stores on her way back. When she arrived home, and the presents were made, we were all delighted with the metamorphose which they created in our little country friend. I think, by the hearty, cheerful reception with which Katie welcomed the gifts, that she had no suspicion of the thorn that was hid amid the roses. Through the influence of this transformation, our church-going on the following day was made comparatively comfortable.

The minister's pew was, in the church at Speedwell, as in most other churches, at the extreme front, so that our family had always the privilege of running the gauntlet of all the eyes in the house, on their entrance there. How satisfied were we, on this day, when we knew that some of our parishioners were waiting our coming with anxiety, to be able to meet their scrutinizing gaze unabashed. So through the public exercises of the day we passed our criticism unscathed.

But fate decreed that we should not wear even these hard-earned laurels without a shadow overtaking them. When we returned home from the afternoon service, Mrs. Stebbins and a fashionable friend of hers made the heat an excuse to call at our house and rest on their way homeward. Nell saw at once that the old-fashioned dress would be exposed when the outer coverings were laid aside, and thus the triumph of the day end in mortifying defeat; so by a strategic movement she attempted to outgeneral her foes.

"Come, Katie," said she, "it is too warm to go up stairs so soon after our walk. Let us rest a while before we lay our things off."

"It seems to me that is bad logic," replied Katie, innocently; "if it is too warm to take shawls off, it is certainly too warm to keep them on. I will take yours up stairs when I go, with mine, and then we shall both be relieved of them. Won't that be the best way?"

"I don't know but it will," replied Nell, faintly; for the mischief was already done. While Katie had been speaking, she had taken off her shawl and bonnet, and, with her usual obliging manner, she was running about the room collecting the outer garments of Nell and the children, which were to be carried to the upper story. In this way, she very unconsciously became the most conspicuous object in

the room; and came thus under range of the full batteries of criticism, which were levelled upon her in a most merciless manner.

Nell almost cried from vexation; John, who had been made privy to our plot, looked fiercely indignant at the harmless subject of his displeasure, while Mrs. Stebbins curled her proud lip, with a supercilious air, which said, plainer than words —

"Ah! your fine country birds shed their plumage easily, don't they?"

Why do I dwell so at length on these mortifications? They would grow tedious (if they have not already done so) did I continue them. The whole week of Katie's stay was filled with similar incidents. As I am dealing with results rather than details in this story, let me sum up this division of my narrative by telling you that before the end of the week came, we were all reconciled to the thought of Katie's departure. Nell was weary with trying to work out expedients of safety for one so constantly exposed to ridicule. John, in spite of his love for her, seemed to chill with dread whenever she appeared in the parlors, and even poor Katie herself had grown weary-hearted, amid our heavy burdens. She came to us in her summer vacation, when she was worn out with the anxieties of teaching, and longed for rest. She came to fulfil a promise which we had

ourselves exacted of her before we left the country parsonage. But little rest or cheer had she received in all these days which, through so many months, she had looked forward to as an oasis in her dreary desert of life.

May God forgive us all for so misunderstanding our true relations, that we could glean so much misery from his harvest-fields, where we should only have garnered joy.

CHAPTER V.

THE sultry heat of July gave way at last to the sultrier heat of August. All the city looked jaded and weary, and worn. Every one asked his next neighbor when he was going to the seaside, or the mountains; and nearly everybody joined the great procession of pleasure-goers, who daily, by car, or boat, or stage, took up their line of march from the smoking chimneys and sweltering brick walls of the city, to the refreshing nooks which the country offered.

Nell and I had held a consultation on the best and most feasible way of spending our vacation. We longed for the breath of the hills, as only those can long, who have lived amid their hallowed influence. We were weary, not as denizens of cities are, who take their country recreation only as an interlude in their ordinary life; but weary as only those can be, who are strang-

ers to the unnatural cause of their weariness, and would be refreshed by the atmosphere to which they are native.

We had planned to gratify this longing, by spending our vacation in the little country town where we were born, amid the Green Mountains in Vermont. It was many years since we had been there. Not because our inclination would not have led us thitherward every summer of our lives. But while we were living on so small a salary, and had so many demands for money, we had not thought it possible for us to go. Among the first plans that we made for the spending of our "Thousand a Year," was the taking of this long-desired journey. Now that the time had nearly arrived for our going, we began to take a second sober thought about the expediency of it. Our necessary expenses had already been so great that we had come to ask one another now, whenever the subject was broached, can we, ought we, to afford the expense?

While we were weighing the matter in our minds, and the magnet prudence was trembling nearer and nearer to its coincidence with inclination, I was accosted one day on the street by Mr. Hersey, one of my wealthiest parishioners.

"Ah, I am glad to meet you," said he; "I was intending to call at your house, but being

pressed with my business cares this morning, I shall gladly accept this opportunity of saying what I wish to you. Where are you going to spend your vacation?"

"We were going up into Vermont," I replied, "to visit some relatives, and spend a few weeks among the hills where we were born."

"Oh! I am very sorry that you have matured a plan, for I came to invite you to go with our family to Niagara."

"Thank you," said I. "I should have been delighted to have accepted the invitation, had circumstances been different with us. But we have promised ourselves this visit for a long time, and I think Nell could hardly be persuaded to give it up now."

"Wouldn't another summer answer for your visit to Vermont? My wife and I have really set our hearts on having you go with us to Niagara, and we don't know how to yield now. If there be no reason but this for your declining our invitation, wont you talk the matter over with your wife, and see if you cannot consent to suit your plans to ours?"

I wanted exceedingly to go to Niagara. It had been all my life one of my darling hopes, but I had never yet been anywhere near the chance of its realization. I wanted to go as I had wanted few things in my life, but I knew

the expense of such a trip ought not to be incurred by us the present year, so I said frankly —

"I should love to go above all things, but even if our other plan were out of the way, I think we ought not to afford so extensive a journey as that this summer."

"That shall not stand in your way," said he; "I will cheerfully furnish you with tickets for the entire trip, so you can put the money consideration out of the calculation entirely."

I was quite overcome by this sudden and unexpected piece of generosity. I did what people usually do on such occasions; made a very awkward attempt at thanks, and promising to communicate with him soon again on the subject, I hurried home to tell Nell the wonderful piece of good fortune, and ask what she thought of it. One command I certainly disobeyed on my way home that day. I did not let my "moderation be known among men." From the time of my leaving Mr. Hersey, to the time of reaching my own door, was a shorter period than I had ever before occupied in going over the same space.

I burst into Nell's presence with an air of elastic joy, which only the bearers of good tidings carry about with them.

Nell, with true woman's instinct for divining, anticipated my message, and before I could get

my breath to speak, she broke the silence, saying —

"What wonderful fortune has happened to us now? Your face indicates good news."

"The indications then are truthful," I replied. "I have something to tell you that I think will smooth the wrinkles temporarily, even from your care-worn brow."

"What is it? do not delay. I cannot afford to content myself long to-day with anticipated joy; I need now to rest in realities."

"Then," I replied, "I will not aggravate you by delay. I cannot be selfish enough to keep such good news long to myself. Mr. Hersey and his wife are about to start on a journey to Niagara, and to the many kindnesses which we have already received at their hands, they add the offer to make us their travelling companions, and pay the expense of the entire trip. What think ye, my quiet little wife, of that much generosity?"

Nell looked at me incredulously. She sat a moment mute, even holding her breath, as if she were thinking that a sudden expiration might blow away this gilded bubble of good luck which was swinging before her eyes. Then came the beautiful smile which always comes over her face when the look of patient endurance gives way before a sudden joy.

Oh, ye aspiring artists, who weep that you cannot bring forth on canvas your conceptions of the beautiful, who —

> "Through long days of labor,
> And nights devoid of ease,"

have striven to perfect the conception which still eludes your eager grasp, why may ye not find rest for your souls, in practising in this new department of art?

If you cannot create your ideal of beauty on canvas, try with the pencil of kindness, your gentle traceries upon the human heart, and you shall evoke such miracles of brilliant beauty upon the human face, that no regrets for your lost gift shall sadden your heart amid your new possessions. You are working then for the gallery of a high Master, and he will reward you with richer treasures than any earthly patron can offer.

I watched for a moment, in silence, the tracery of this changing beauty upon her face, and then I broke the spell by saying —

"Give us your decision; shall we make ourselves and our friends happy, by accepting this proffered kindness, or shall we adhere to our original intent, and take the long-promised journey to Vermont?"

There was no delay in the answer. She said, without hesitation —

"Of course we will go to Niagara. There is no reason in the world why we should deny ourselves this high privilege. Mr. Hersey is abundantly able to afford us this pleasure, and I see no reason why we should shrink from accepting the favor at his hands. We can go to Vermont another summer, when we are better able to bear the expense of a journey ourselves, while this season we will enjoy at the expense of our neighbors. Isn't that a comfortable as well as an economical plan?"

"It is certainly comfortable," I replied; "but it remains to be seen whether it prove the most economical journey of the two."

"How can you make such a suggestion?" Nell inquired, "when you have just told me that Mr. Hersey proposes to pay the expenses of the entire trip?"

"Did I make the statement in that way? Then I was mistaken in my use of words, for as I remember his proposition, it was to furnish us tickets for the entire trip, though he said nothing about the incidental expenses, which you know, on such a journey must be considerable."

"Yes; something must of course be expended in that way; but nothing as much as we would spend on our journey to Vermont. You know our travelling expense to Vermont and back would have been little less than fifty dollars.

We certainly shall not let as much money as that slip through our fingers at Niagara."

"Well, that remains to be seen. I think we may with safety try it, and see what the result will prove. Shall I go and tell Mr. Hersey that we have decided to accept his offer?"

"Yes; and ask particulars as to the time that we are to start, the number of weeks that we are to be gone, &c. &c."

Thus we were decided on an entire change of plan for our summer vacation; and in place of a free month amid the scenes of our childhood, we had bound ourselves to a plan which was to hold us fast to the conventionalities of fashionable life, and give us no rest, save what communion with Nature's rarest beauty was able to impart to our souls. Such pleasure is bought at a dear price, whatever be the attendant circumstances. But it is particularly unfit, yes, I may go farther, and say it is mockery, to class it under the head of recreation, when taken in the place of, and as a rest from the same unreal life that it represents.

On the afternoon of that day, Mrs. Hersey came down to see Nell, and talk over with her the items of preparation for the journey.

The door from my study into the back parlor chanced to be open when she came in, and I became thus involuntarily a listener to the following conversation.

Before I report it, let me premise it by saying, that Mrs. Hersey was of the Mrs. Stebbins type of character. She regarded the opinion of the fashionable world as the standard to which she must look for praise or blame in regulating her conduct for life. She was going to Niagara because it was fashionable to go. She had invited us to accompany her, partly for our pleasure, but mainly, as I was afterwards convinced, because the name of such generosity would tell well among her circle of friends. Now, having attached us to her caravansary for effect, she could not allow us to defeat a part of her object, by appearing in a style very much inferior to her own. It was with reference to this plot that she had called on Nell.

As soon as the compliments of the afternoon were exchanged, she entered upon her mission by saying —

"I am so glad that you have decided to go with our party to Niagara."

"Are we to go with a party," said Nell, with some astonishment in her voice. "I thought it only Mr. Hersey and yourself that were going."

"Why, you were greatly mistaken. There are certainly a half dozen families beside our own going, and they are the most aristocratic people in town, too."

"Do they belong to our congregation?"

"No; none of them except the Joneses. The others are friends that belong to the circle in which I moved before I was married. Then, you know, I attended Mr. C——'s church, and my associations were of the very best character. I know you will be delighted with the people with whom you will some in contact on this journey. These families that we go in company with, are widely acquainted in the most fashionable and aristocratic society in the country, and I know you will have a delightful time in being introduced to this class of persons."

"But," said Nell, and her voice now had that faint tremor which characterized it whenever she was overborne by any anxiety, "I am afraid that we, with our simple manners, and unassuming style of dress, shall not feel entirely at home in the circle of which you speak."

"Oh, that can be made all right," Mrs. H. responded cheerfully. "You know ministers' families are not expected to assume all the conventionalities of fashionable life, and as for the dress, we can easily renew your wardrobe, as we are not to go until next week. You know people are not like birds doomed to wear one style of plumage forever. They may renew their styles for the season, or the occasion, at their own pleasure."

"I know they may if they have a mine of wealth to draw from, in making their purchases; but this is not the case in many ministers' houses. I really feel quite discouraged about undertaking the journey."

"Nonsense; you are not talking like yourself now. I thought you were cheerful in co-operating with us in this scheme for your pleasure. All these things can be managed easily, if you only think so. 'Tis true, ministers' families have not a mine of wealth to draw from, to satisfy their needs, but with this, like everything else in this world, the supply is in proportion to the demand. Don't you see it is so?"

I listened with interest to hear how Nell would dispose of this curious appeal. Her voice when she commenced her reply, was low and meek, and yet it had an unmistakable flavor of dissent as she said —

"I must confess that I am not yet fully convinced of the truth of your proposition."

"I think I can convince you. In the first place, ministers have a certain and established, and it is usually a very liberal salary, on which to support their families. Now the world does not make the same demands upon a minister that it makes on other men, with regard to the acquisition of wealth. He is not expected to amass riches as other men do, consequently he

has all of his salary to meet present wants. In this way he may make his family luxuriously comfortable, on a salary which might trouble a man in another profession.

"And then again, the world is very lenient in its demands on ministers' families. The 'fashionable world' will accept some innovations even on its rigid rules, when the minister's comfort or convenience is in question. Now, to return to the subject on which our conversation started. You, Mrs. G ——, can presume on a great many privileges, in making up your wardrobe for this journey which would never be given me. You will not be expected, when it is understood that you are a minister's wife, to present so great a variety in your costume as would otherwise be demanded. Your travelling suit will, of course, be expected to harmonize with the dress of the remainder of the party, as we, not being labelled like our trunks, shall stand to the travelling public on equal footing, and be held equally responsible for our appearance. But after we arrive at Niagara, we shall soon be each understood, and placed in our right relations. Now, your black silk dress will bear repeating a great many days in succession, when the fact is accepted that you are a minister's wife. As such, you will not be expected to appear in gay attire, except on festive occasions. And again, you

will not be expected to attend many *soirées*, as ministers' families are not supposed to be gay; so your party dress of the spring will answer your purpose very well.

"Now, with regard to your travelling-dress. When I was coming down here this morning, I saw a beautiful piece of goods in at 'Smith's,' which I knew you would like. Wouldn't you like to go with me and look at it? I am going to have my travelling-dress from that piece, and it seemed to me that it would be pleasant for us to dress alike."

"What is the price?" Nell ventured to ask, timidly.

"Only a dollar a yard," was Mrs. Hersey's reply.

"That seems a good deal for me to pay," replied Nell.

"Yes; I know it seems a good deal when you first think of it; but it will be money well expended, for it is an excellent piece, and the dress will be of service to you for other use after the journey is over. Come, you cannot refuse me, I know, for I have set my heart on our dressing alike."

Nell came into the study to me with this query. "Shall I get an extravagant dress which my judgment disapproves, or shall I disoblige and perhaps offend a friend who has laid us under obligation by so many acts of kindness?"

This was a question not difficult for me to answer.

I replied, "Get the dress by all means, and save the friend. We will try and save the price of it in some other way."

Mrs. Hersey and Nell went out and purchased the dress, which, it proved, was only a "decoy duck," to get her on to the street, and betray her into a multitude of other purchases. She came home almost frightened at the extent of weakness (as she called it) that she had exhibited, but in extenuation she said —

"I am not my own, since we came to this parish, and sold ourselves for 'a Thousand a Year,' and sometimes, as to-day, I get tired of trying to struggle for independence, and I yield, not because of an over-temptation to buy, but simply to escape from my persecutors. You may think that is a strong word to use with reference to friends, but I believe it is a just word, and I must indulge myself in dealing justly once in the midst of such a day as this has been."

We looked over the bills, and to my astonishment — though I here protest that I felt no shadow of blame toward my gentle wife — we found that to make her wardrobe "presentable" at Niagara, had cost us upwards of fifty dollars, and all this, still left us with the consciousness

that she would be odd and uncomfortable among the people with whom she was to mingle, for her extreme plainness of dress; and that they would apologize for her on the ground of her being a minister's wife. Thus, like Cain of old, we bore about with us our separate badge of distinction, and understood that we were not as other men. Was it our glory or shame? our joy or our pain? that circumstances had lifted us into a position where we should be forever humiliated by reason of our difference from others?

Let those who are concerned in paying ministers so meagre a pittance, to meet the necessary outlay of their position, answer this question for themselves.

The extra expense necessary to make me comfortable for the journey, I decided could not possibly be afforded. I ought to have had an entire new travelling suit, but this I could not think of doing. Lacking this, I should have travelled in a partly worn suit of clothing, which would have answered my purpose well for the journey, and left my new suit fit for future use. I say this would have answered my purpose equally well. It would, had Nell and I been making the journey by ourselves; but, going in the company that we were, and especially after receiving so broad a hint about our appearance, I had not the moral courage to appear otherwise than in

my best. I wore it, and as a consequence, it came home so soiled and worn, that for the following three months I had the mortification of appearing in my pulpit with the consciousness that my people were thinking their minister too shabby and unfit for his place. How I, at the end of three months, was able to lay aside this condition of demi-shabbiness, and appear again in fitting plumage, I will report in another chapter. Let me now confine my narration to the joy and economy of our journey to Niagara.

By the time the day of our departure arrived, Nell had arranged all the articles of her toilet, in a manner to make the very most of her scanty resources.

I had watched her with anxiety, and yet with a certain feeling of pleasure, as she had gone over with her nimble fingers each of her partly worn articles of dress, rubbing, burnishing, new trimming, and in a most marvellous way, rejuvenating articles, which, at first sight, I should have said could never have been rescued from the ignominy of age which had overtaken them. The question may still be open for discussion, whether the "leopard can change his spots," but certainly, into my mind there has never crept a doubt from that week onward, that a woman can, in a most astonishing manner, change from blue to green, from gray to black,

from pink to purple, and so on, to an almost indefinite number of transformations, articles of her outward attire, when she desires.

Let others say what they will, or think what they may of the poverty of Nell's dress on that long-to-be-remembered journey. In my eyes, who knew the materials of which her variety was made, she blossomed marvellously. All honor to the ingenuity by which she transformed little to much, old to new, and poverty to riches, as her circumstances demanded. She has had from me ever since, something of the devotion which I would bestow upon a magician of the East, had I witnessed his wonder-working.

When the day arrived for us to start on our journey, we had the satisfaction of appearing at the depot dressed as well as any members of the party. We were at least gratified during the few hours of travel, by seeming in as good circumstances as those with whom we associated. We tried to leave trouble and care behind us. We strove to unmoor from our old personality, and to appear, for the nonce, as if we were born kings or princes of the land. Can you, dear reader, appreciate or sympathize with such weakness? Not if you were born and bred in luxury, with abundance to supply your every want. Not if you have been a leader in the world of fashion, moving like a central sun amid

the satellites which surround you. I do not look to you, if that be your social status, for sympathy. I would not expect to find a man enthusiastic about Hamlet, who had never heard that Shakespeare lived. I should not expect a tender appreciation of art from one who had never seen a picture. We must be cultured in any particular direction, before we can understand the path in which we tread.

Do I therefore despair of sympathy in the story of our common trials and weaknesses? Not by any means. I know that wealth and luxury are the exception, and not the rule of life. I know that while the few wrap themselves in "purple and fine linen," the many struggle and strive, and by patient bearing with the crosses of life, find their way to heaven over thorny paths of pain, and through tangled wildernesses of self-denial. By the majorities, then, I shall be understood, when I confess to having felt joy over so simple a thing as being able for a day or two, to appear richer than I was.

Mrs. Hersey seemed gratified with our appearance, and I thought I detected a manifest pride in her voice when she introduced to her friends, "our minister and his wife." Nell blushed like a girl at Mr. Hersey's compliment on meeting her. He said —

"Really, Mrs. G ——, you have renewed your

youth. I never saw you look as well in my life. If your beauty improves in this proportion throughout the journey, you will be the belle of the season, and the young girls will have to look out for their laurels."

It was well that we commenced the day with compliments. Had they been delayed a few hours, they could not have been truthfully uttered, for we fairly swam through dust the livelong day. By noon we were so black as to be almost unrecognizable, and the coming of the night made little appreciable difference with the color of the party. We arrived at Niagara at midnight, dusty, weary, and worn. I am about to make a most humiliating confession. Notwithstanding I was for the first time in my life within sight of that wonder of the world, I went to sleep like a weary child, without realizing my privilege and joy.

I could never be guilty of the same sin again. I have been introduced now to its beauty, and from this time forth it is forever mine.

Is it not so with all our joys? The persons that we love best, those who are now most essential to our happiness, were nothing to us before we met them face to face. We were not conscious of the vacant place in our hearts, which was waiting for their reception. We did not know that our lives were imperfect and

wanting, before they came to us. But once having received them to the inner sanctuary of our hearts, there is darkness in that room forever after, when the light of their love is withdrawn. We stayed a week at Niagara. A week which, notwithstanding its wearying complicity with the conventionalities of fashionable life, I count as among the happiest weeks of my life.

For the most part we were hampered and beset by the obligations which our friends imposed upon us. We were continually compelled to ride when we would rather have walked. Nell was always dressing for breakfast, or dinner, or tea, or for the evening, when I wanted her to go out with me. We were constantly called upon to enliven the company with conversation, when we longed to flee away from the silly drawing-room chit-chat, and listen to the voice of God amid the great waters. But in spite of all these annoyances, there was joy, high, noble, and true. There were hours, when the others were sleeping, that I stole out alone to worship God in this most superb tabernacle, where his majesty, and might, and power are forever vindicated.

Shall I ever forget the lessons which that week taught me, of reliance, of patient trust, of unquestioning leaning on an Arm, whose strength could thus hold the mighty forces of nature in its grasp? It was a lesson which, recurring to my

heart in after years, in many a troubled hour, brought quiet, rest, and peace.

Did I regret the expense of the journey, when, in after months I was perplexed to know where the money to meet my daily wants was to be procured? I cannot truly say that I did. Of all the luxuries in which we indulged during that troubled year, those hours at Niagara should be most unwillingly spared from my memory.

I can bear to be poor in outward surroundings, I can omit without regret, the external adornments of my body, but the memories of beauty which decorate the inner chambers of my mind, these are mine forever, and I can never regret the money with which they have been purchased.

At the end of two weeks, the members of our party began to grow uneasy, and to long restlessly for a change. They resolved to leave Niagara, and finish the season's pleasuring by a trip down the St. Lawrence, and a visit to the White Mountains. When this decision was made, Nell and I concluded to turn our faces homeward.

Mr. Hersey kindly offered to continue us as *attachés* to the party; but while he did so, something in his manner convinced me that if we declined his offer, we should stand as high in his opinion as if we accepted it. We accordingly

refused to go farther, pleading our family cares as a reason for our return home, and I have always had a secret consciousness that we were commended for our judgment by every member of the party from whom we separated.

The journey home was delightful. We had the satisfaction of knowing that of the happiness created by our decision to return home alone, we were large sharers. We were entirely free in our actions. We chose the route that we most preferred. We dressed as we chose. We dined when we liked, and if it was our preference to make our meals cost us one dollar instead of five, that was our own concern, and there was none to say us nay.

No one looked askance at us, when, overcome with the weariness of travel, we preferred curling ourselves into the shape of a rainbow for sleep. We had tried the upright position on our outward journey, through deference to our friends' opinion, and the consequence had been, we had jerked the muscles of our neck to a most uncomfortable soreness, and bumped the back of our head until we despaired of its ever being useful again, as a sound member of our body. Now we were free to rest our weary, ill-treated bodies, and we did so without fear of reproach.

I know of no place where one can be so free and fearless of criticism, as on the highways of

travel, or in the heart of a great city. No one should go outside the proper limits of civilized life in either place, but, restricted by decent limits, it is a luxury to indulge yourself in ease, without your next neighbor having the right to say, "This shall not be."

I believe ministers feel this joy in an unusual degree. Think of the privilege of owning one's self for twenty-four, forty-eight, or any undefined number of hours, without being once reminded of your chains of servitude.

I was happy, and Nell, too, seemed like an uncaged bird. She sang and laughed with the abandon of childhood. It made no inconsiderable part of my joy to see her seem so like a girl again. We enjoyed ourselves as much as it was *possible for us* to do, and those words mean a great deal, for we have a way of thinking that our capacity in the direction of joy is as great as any one can boast.

But this journey, like all our earthly joys, came to an end. We reached home without accident, found the home hearts beating warm for us, and with cheerful resignation we fell into the old routine of cares and duties, as if we had never been away from them.

A few days after our return, Nell asked me, timidly, if I had dared make an estimate of the expense of our journey.

I replied, "I had hoped, Nell, that you would not ask me that, for your peace of mind may be disturbed by my answer."

"Not in the least," she replied; "I am prepared to hear you say that a deep dent has been made in your purse by the expenses of this journey. I will not shrink from knowing just how much it has been."

"If you wish to know, I can tell you; for I have been looking over the items very carefully this morning. Our hotel bill alone was fifty-six dollars, and our incidental expenses nearly as much more; adding it all, I find that we have one hundred and four dollars less than when we started. This, with your bill for clothing, to fit you for the journey, takes about one hundred and sixty dollars from our salary."

"Well," said Nell, "Mr. Hersey's generous offer has not proved quite as advantageous for us as we first thought, has it?"

"Not quite," I replied; "yet our bill would have been much larger if we had had all the expense of the journey. We will be thankful for what of favor we have received. Mr. Hersey was very kind to think of taking us with him. Had it not been for him, we might never have seen Niagara. We will be grateful for this, and make the most of the high privilege which we have enjoyed, while at the same time it must

be too as a wholesome lesson for future use. We must understand now, how to take the offer of a friend, when he will spend five dollars for us, with the understood privilege, that he shall see us spend fifteen.

CHAPTER VI.

NOT long after our return from Niagara, we were in the study one evening, Nell, as usual, bending over her work-basket, and I, weary with my day's work, lounging on the couch beside her.

Nell seemed unusually thoughtful that evening, and I, enough accustomed to her moods to know that there was always a background of trouble when she was very serious, insisted on knowing what was the subject of her thought.

"I was thinking seriously," she replied, "whether we ought not to abandon this city parish, and go back to our old home in the country."

"Why, Nell, I am astonished to hear such a proposition from your lips. I thought you were all courage about this experiment."

"I was, at the commencement, but we are like children going into the water, who have never

learned to swim; we are getting out beyond our depth, and going daily farther and farther, with no knowledge of a way to get back again. I have been as economical as I could possibly be in our domestic affairs, but, doing my very best, see how deeply we are involved in debt."

"But," said I, "Nell, we cannot go back now, if we would. You know that with the salary we got there, we barely existed, and how could we hope ever to pay our debts, unless we earned more money than we got before.

"But we did manage to live without getting involved as we are doing here, and, bad as that pinching life was, it was better than this terrible oppression of debt. If we never get the debts paid that we already owe, by going there, we should be prevented from going deeper, and that hope we cannot have while we remain here."

"We can't tell that, Nell; we haven't given this place a fair trial yet. We have only been here six months, and of course we expected a great deal of expense in getting settled. It has taken half a year to make a beginning, the next half year will decide whether that beginning has been made wisely or unwisely. It seems to me that there would be no justice in deserting the ship before we really know whether she is seaworthy or not. And furthermore, we have not begun to have the perquisites yet, about which

you were so hopeful, when we talked of this matter before. Don't let your courage run down with the thermometer. It is coming cold weather now, and there is the more need of our all being brave and hopeful."

"I know it," Nell replied. "I feel ashamed of myself that I ever have a discouraged feeling, but with so many and varied troubles besetting one on the right hand and on the left, it would take more than human endurance to always seem cheerful. A flitting shadow may drift over one's landscape of life, and, with an effort, we may be able to meet its approach, and endure its presence with a smile. But a long-continued weight of cloud lying between us and the sun, leaves the heart chill and dreary."

Before I had time for reply, while I was weighing in my mind the question whether, having once had our hearts bathed in a golden flood from the Sun of Righteousness, we ought not thenceforward to retain enough of its light to make our pathway bright, my wise reflections were all interrupted by a violent ringing of the door-bell.

I waited immediately on the impatient comer. The night was wild and stormy, and as soon as the door was opened, the sudden gust which entered, extinguished the gas in the hall, so that my visitor and I stood face to face in the darkness.

I could only discern before me the figure of a man, but the deep blackness made it impossible for me to distinguish a characteristic of his person, or a feature of his face. It is always a peculiar sensation when we hold converse with a person without seeing them. It is especially so, when we are meeting them for the first time. We depend so much upon the capacity of sight to reveal to us the characteristics of a new acquaintance, that we have come to regard our eyes as the principal medium through which we receive our introduction to the fleshly man. Seeing one, is our natural earthly meeting. But when we meet, greet, and pass the observances of companionship, without seeing, it is as if we had passed the bounds of sense, and with our spiritual impulses had reached out and touched the spirit of one unclothed of mortality, and adorned with the garments of light. How much of prejudice, and all uncharitableness will be taken from us when we no longer criticise the friend we meet through the instincts of our bodily organs. We shall not then be deceived by imperfect vision, but with the eyes of angels, looking into angels' eyes, we shall see truthfully as we are seen, and know perfectly as we are known.

But I have left my guest waiting long at the threshold; and though I cannot introduce you to him more fully in narrating the events of that

night, than I have already done, I can at least recur to the conversation, and tell you the errand on which he came.

His purpose was to propose the coming of a wedding party to my house on the following evening, and to assure himself that I would be at home when they came. Having accomplished this, and made the time of the service known, he took his departure, without my learning of him even so much as the name he bore.

I returned to the study, and narrated my adventure to Nell, much to her amusement, and not without a manifest excitement of her curiosity.

"Why could you not have asked who the parties were?" she said, with evident annoyance at my carelessness. "No woman could have performed a feat like that. If one had chanced to have done so, it would have been told as a specimen of feminine incapacity for business, to the latest day of her life."

"Well," I replied, "I can't see that it makes any very material difference in this case, whether our curiosity is gratified before the morrow or not. It is only necessary that I be ready to perform the marriage ceremony. Whether the parties be rich or poor, black or white, comely or otherwise, I don't know that it matters to us in the least."

"There's where you are mistaken, certainly," said Nell; "it does make a good deal of difference to us, whether the parties be rich or poor. You know that the question of John's going to the Commercial College this winter, is to be answered in some such way as this. We cannot, must not, afford it, unless we get some extra help, outside of our regular income. We must save every dollar of that, to pay the debt which we have incurred."

"You don't think that one wedding would lift us over that pitfall, do you, Nell?"

"That will depend on what kind of wedding it is. If, with the certificate to-morrow, you should find a hundred-dollar bill, it would supply John with all the necessary means to defray his winter's expenses. O! I do so hope that it is one of the rich weddings!"

"It is nowise probable that there will be more than a twentieth part of the sum you mention coming from the wedding. As for John's prospects, I must confess they have troubled me not a little. We cannot, in justice to ourselves, do anything for him this winter. He will have to break out a path for his own feet. Perhaps he can get into some business this season, from the proceeds of which he may be able to save enough to take him to the Commercial College another year."

"But that will be a great disappointment to John and Katie, for I believe they were intending to be married another winter, if John could succeed in getting into business by that time."

"I know it, Nell; but we cannot always order the events of our lives as we would wish. John must consent to the necessities consequent upon our position in life, as we have ourselves to do. I would like a great many things which would add to my usefulness in my profession, but I deny myself, because our circumstances actually demand it; and our children must learn the same lessons of self-denial."

"I suppose they must learn many of them, but we must shelter them as much as possible, lest they grow discouraged on the very commencement of the pathway of life. *We* can bear disappointments better than they, and beside, their development being just begun, they need more expense and care lavished on them now, than they will ever need at any other time in their lives."

"They need care and watchful guidance, I know," I replied; "but I have a theory, that what of true metal is within them, will be burnished brighter by the polish of necessity. If they are true gold, they will only shine with a better lustre; if they be spurious coin, the gilding may as well be washed away in youth, and they find their true level, and fit place in life."

"I know that all sounds very well in theory, but when we come to the practical test, there is not one parent in a thousand, who would not sooner educate his own sons, and fit them for the work of life, than to drive them to bitter necessities in their early years."

"Granted. But we have no choice. I only preach the doctrine of contentment, with the circumstances in which we find ourselves."

"I am going to hope for the best. I believe the wedding to-morrow will bring the circumstances for which our hearts hope."

"Hope on; but temper your hope with moderation, lest your disappointment to-morrow outweigh the joy you feel to-day."

Thus we dropped the conversation, and betook ourselves to sleep, or, I should more truthfully say, I did; for Nell afterward confessed that her golden visions chased sleep from her eyelids through the greater portion of the night. Do not look upon these words with a derisive smile, dear reader, or think of my gentle Nell with severe and sarcastic criticism. It may seem a paltry reason to give for a night of wakeful watching. If it does seem so to you, thank God that you have never learned, by bitter experience, the lesson which would enable you to understand and sympathize with such restlessness of heart.

The morning came, dull, and dark, and dreary.

Clouds lay low, which in the afternoon ripened into a storm. I chanced to be unusually busy that day in my study. My duties pressed me to close and earnest labor. I did not leave my study-table at all, save a few moments for a late and hurried dinner, which, as was my custom on those very busy days, I took alone and in silence.

Nell so well understood my habits of mind, that she never disturbed me at such times by questionings or suggestions. I am not a morose man, nor, at my hours for genial intercourse, am I thought unsocial; but there are times when I am so closely occupied with my mental work, that I must have days when my soul stands alone before God. I work under his superintendence, in the mines of thought, where lie hidden the richest treasures which have ever been concealed. I stand a solitary worker in his presence. I toil, and am weary, and sometimes I grope in darkness; but I know my Master watches me, and I toil on. I labor unfalteringly, where thousands before me have struggled to upturn the mysteries of wisdom. I see the bleaching bones beside me of the multitudes who have perished, spending their sands of life to make part of the great beach which girdles the shores of time. I look upon them sadly, thinking that I, too, shall soon depart, and mayhap

leave a trackless pathway over all the way that I have trodden. Yet I toil on. What matters it if the footprint of each traveller cannot be distinctly traced. The path is hardened and perfected over which we tread, and generations yet unborn shall march down this great highway of thought, and bless the workers who have gone before them, and beaten the track for their feet. A single wave of time may blot out my memory, and my footprint from the earth. Yet I toil on, for I know that my feet, now weary and travel-soiled on time's rough shore, shall be strengthened by their toilsome marching, and that one day, as my Master before me trod the troubled waves of Galilee, I shall go forth upon the boundless, shoreless sea, untroubled, though alone.

But I wander. I must not let a waif of thought sweep me thus away from my narration. An occasional reader may feel an interest in the account of my daily pursuits; but the majorities, I know, would urge me on to describe the wedding-party, and its attendant incidents.

The evening came, dark and stormy. Nell had arranged our parlors in a manner to display in the most telling way every item of luxury of which we were possessed. The rooms looked cheerful, and bright and cosey. It mattered little to us, who were gathered under that secure

and comfortable retreat, that the storm beat wildly without.

Nell recognized the cheerful tendency of beauty, with a more appreciative glance than others were able to do. She had an artistic eye which caught and gathered up gleanings of beauty, and wove them into a fabric of joy, while a more ordinary person would have passed them by entirely unheeded.

The warm, soft atmosphere of the room would have melted our hearts into the most social, genial converse, had we not been held under partial restraint by the thought that interruption was certain.

Why is humanity, in trivial as in great things to be fettered forever by expectancy? We never sit down to pleasure with a whole-hearted enjoyment. The mind, reaching out its tendrils of anticipation, must forever touch the skeleton which would not sit with us at the feast, did we not thus rudely reach to seek its companionship.

Nell gave proof of this tendency of human nature, by saying, "I almost wish this wedding-party were not coming. How happy we might be if we were going to enjoy all this evening by ourselves."

"But your golden dreams, dear Nell, where have they vanished? Could the evening be

ours, it would be but a present joy, while your hope whispers of many hours of peace and profit to come, as the result of this evening."

I said this laughingly, for, from the first, I had built no air-castles about the wedding.

"You need not laugh at my anticipations," Nell replied. "I feel more and more sure that they will be realized; and now that the time is so nearly come, your opportunity for criticism will be soon past.

"How fortunate we are," she continued, "having our parlors furnished in a manner befitting such an occasion! Now, if some wealthy, aristocratic families are represented in the parties coming to-night, (and I feel sure they will be), how uncomfortable we should feel if we had to receive them in a small room meagrely furnished."

"Like yourself, again, Nell," I replied, "gleaning comfort from sources whence others would never have thought of looking for it. We have reason to be thankful for our temporal surroundings, but we have more reason for thanksgiving because of the cheerful spirit which enables you to turn dross to gold, — anxiety to peace, — and sorrow to a reconciled joy, amid all the conflicts and troubles of life."

I was pleased with my course of thought, and should certainly have pursued it farther, had I

not been pushed from my balance of reflection by the sharp click of the door-bell. Physiologists tell us of our sense of touch through the medium of which we communicate with the outward world. I raise this query in passing:

Does not sound through its contact with our external ear, telegraph to our mental being, and as really touch us as the hand of a friend, which laid in ours with a gentle pressure, says, "you are dear to my heart." My friend *says* he loves me, and his words *touch* my heart. He touches me with his hand, and the *touch speaks* to every fibre of my being. Thus laced and interlaced, our words, and thoughts, and sensations, make up the web and woof of that strange, spiritual being which is to-day touched, spoken to, and communicated with, through the bodily senses, but to-morrow reads with the alphabet of the angels.

You are waiting to receive the wedding-guests, dear reader; so were we, at the moment of which I write. But you, as were we, are doomed to disappointment. I found at the door only the child of a neighbor, who had called to tell me that his father was very sick and requested me to visit him that evening. I returned to the parlor to meet disappointed faces, and to say to Nell, jestingly —

"Had you been expecting your dearest friend, your look could not contain in it more of disappointment than it this moment wears."

Thus we opened a new topic, which kept us in amusement another hour. We were cheerful and happy, yet we realized that we were waiting expectant, and that our looked-for guests had not arrived. When the clock struck eight, we looked at one another inquiringly, for seven had been the hour appointed by my unseen visitor of the previous evening.

During the next hour, the conversation grew dull. We listened at every sound, as if something of importance awaited us. At half-past eight, I proposed a book, and we tried to drown our cares with others' thoughts, when the tide of our own had failed us. Just before nine there came a soft pull at the bell, as if some one half undecided whether to come in or stay out, had finally concluded on the former. I answered the summons immediately, not in the least expecting to find the wedding-party, as I, though I had been listening intently, had not heard the sound of carriages approaching. At the door, I found a gentleman and lady unattended, their dress much disordered by the wind. They had evidently walked a long distance, as their clothing was quite wet. Their umbrella turned wrong side out, had manifestly been a very poor protection to them. Their whole appearance might be described in one word — *draggled*.

I was in doubt. Could this strange couple, so

lone and forlorn, have any connection with the wedding-party that we were expecting? Surely not; they must have come on some other errand; perhaps they were beggars and wanted shelter for the night. All these thoughts drifted through my mind, much quicker than I have written them. They were all annihilated at once by the man's saying in a stentorian voice —

"Wall, parson, aint this gittin' married under difficulties? We've had a blue time on't so far, sartain."

It took me some time to find my voice before I could make reply. Meantime, my guest broke silence again, saying —

"Ain't you going to ax us to come in? It'll be bluer yet if we've got to go back agin without gittin' married, arter we've took all this trouble."

"Certainly, certainly; walk in," said I, finding my voice, at this unexpected questioning of my hospitality. Then, by way of apology for my hesitation, I said —

"I didn't know before that you wished to be married."

"Zounds!" said the stentorian voice again, "didn't *her* dad come here last night, and tell you we was goin' to get married to-night. He said he'd come; now, ef he's lied to me, I'll —"

I hastened to interrupt the threatening, thinking what disastrous consequences might follow,

if "*her* dad," and his new son-in-law should begin life with a disagreement.

"Come in, come in," said I; "it is all right. I was informed last night, that I should be expected to perform a marriage ceremony this evening."

"Then what did you say you want a lookin' for us for? I thought you was off your reckonin', all the time; for I didn't believe the ole man would darst begin that way with me."

Evidently I had before me a rare specimen of the *genus homo*. I opened the door for his entrance, and observed him under the full light of the hall, much as I would have examined any natural curiosity. He was very tall, and his immense height seemed more conspicuous, by reason of his clothes being as tight as the skin over which he wore them. In this respect his pants seemed an exact model of his skin, but, in another respect, quite different; as the pants stopped about half way between the knee and ankle, but it was easily to be observed that the skin continued into the slip-shod shoe, which loosely covered the foot. There was an attempt at a pair of stockings, but the magnetic currents of the ankle seemed repellant to them, and they lay down over the shoe in a most affectionate manner. There had certainly been an attempt at hair-dressing, on his part; for despite the drab-

bled look which the rain produced, manifestly grease predominated in the black matted locks which covered his head and neck. Of the face, I will not attempt description, farther than to say I think Michael Angelo would not have selected it as a model of beauty. It was not a desperate face, nor did it bear evidence of unbridled passion; but unmitigated verdure dwelt in every feature.

The woman, what shall I say of her? Not as much as I have said of her companion, for, though she seemed not to have more of culture than he, she, — woman-like, preserved in her demeanor, the semblance of better things. She had made a tawdry attempt at a wedding garment, which, like that of her liege lord, lacked both in quality and quantity. Her bonnet and shawl had suffered from the inclemency of the weather. Her face (except a slightly frightened look) was bright and sunny. The whole figure gave you an impression of an attempt at joy, which had been overtaken by adverse and boisterous circumstances. Immediately on her entrance, she dropped into a chair which stood by the door, with an air of abandon that might have been envied by a careless child. Every item of her attitude said, "I have arrived at my journey's end, and am content."

Another chair sat near her, and I hoped that

the hero of my tale might imitate her example, put himself in an attitude of quiet, and thus give me an opportunity of preparing the minds of my family, before I ushered these strange guests into the parlors. But no inclination of that kind seemed to possess his mind. Standing directly between me and the door of the parlor, he said —

"You say *her* dad bargained with you to do a marriage with ceremony. Neow, I tell you I don't want nothing of the sort. We aint that kind of folks. I want you to jest marry us straight up and down, without any sort o' chicken-fixens about it any way. I haint no objections to goin' in your parlor, for it. Specially if you've got a fire in your fireplace, for I must own I feel like a feller what's had a wet blanket throwed over his calculations."

He did not wait for me to enter protest or give assent, but pushing the door open, he made his *entrée* before I could overtake him with a single question respecting his name, that I might introduce him to the family within.

Inviting the lady to follow, with a strange mixture of the surprised and the ludicrous in my mind, I went in the footsteps of my extraordinary guests, into the presence of my family. Never shall I forget the look with which Nell greeted my entrance. It was to me the most

amusing part of the whole scene. She had evidently overheard the conversation in the hall, and knew, thereby, that the expected wedding-party had arrived. She had arisen when the door opened, but instead of approaching to give her usual cordial, graceful greeting to her guests, she stood close to the chair from which she had arisen, as one transfixed. All those golden visions, — all those anticipations of aristocratic guests, seemed to have started out from her countenance, and surrounded it with a halo of indescribable surprise.

The bridegroom expectant seemed not to notice the air of astonishment which surrounded him. He was making a hasty circuit of the room, seeming to take an inventory of its contents. A manifest look of discontent settled on his features as he finished his examination. Turning to me he said, abruptly —

"Can't you afford no fireplace?"

"We don't feel the need of one," I replied, "since our house is furnished with a furnace. If you will come here to the register, you can find heat enough."

"No, you don't," he replied. "You aint a goin' to catch me in that trap, bein' registered afore I'm married. I aint agoin' to lose time in that way, I tell you. You can do your registerin' arter we're gone."

"Come, Sal," said he, turning to the lady, "let's we get married, and be off agin to dad's chimney corner, for they haint got none of the comforts of life in this house, for all they pretend to be so starchy."

"Sal" made no objection to this proposition, neither did she make any advance toward its fulfilment. She sat in the first chair which she had encountered after her entrance to the parlor, the same stolid content on her face, mingled with a bewildered look of astonishment at the variety of beauty about her.

"Come on, Sal, I tell you," he repeated, in a more peremptory tone than before. "If you expect to get married to me, to-night, you'd better be about it, for I aint agoin' to wait in this ere oncomfortable fix long, I'll let you know."

Surely, I thought, comfort is relative, governed in part by the persons interested. We had thought our parlors the "*sine qua non*" of all excellence in this respect, but here, into our midst, drops an uncultured plebeian, who finds only weary restraint and discomfort in our symbols of joy.

While this thought was passing through my mind, "Sal" had found her way to her admirer's side; he had seized her hand, drawn her arm to the elbow, through his own, and with Herculean strides they were bearing down upon me like a

seventy-four gun-ship, under full spread of canvas.

Delay was impossible, even if it had been desirable. I went through with the necessary preliminaries of getting the certificate, and informing myself of the names of the parties as quietly as possible. But I smile when I write, to think how *impossible* quiet was. I said, *sotto-voce*—

"Have you a certificate?"

"Wall, I reckon I has. You didn't think I'd be fool enough to come here without one, did ye? And I aint one mite ashamed of it, so you needn't be whisperin' about it that way."

The names were not written very distinctly on the certificate, and to assure myself I asked him what they were.

"My name! what, don't you know that yet? My name is Abinidab Brown, and that's a name to be proud on, if there's any use in pride about anything."

"And the lady's name," I suggested.

"*Her* name! why her name is Sal Higgins, it is. But we aint spectin' twill be *that* long, if you get to marryin' us within any reasonable distance of this time."

Then I proceeded with the ceremony.

"My Christian brother and sister, I require and charge ye both, as ye will answer at the awful day of judgment, when the

secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it."

"Wall, neow," said Abinidab, "I can't see how that is any of your business, any way. But if ye must know, Sal stutters, or has somethin' that I believe they call a '*pediment* in her speech.' Now, if I'm willin' to take her for all that (and I am, for she's a darn sight smarter than any of the rest of the gals, and I never thought it was any improvement to a woman to talk like a house a fire), if I'm willin, I say, to take her, I don't see why you shouldn't go on marrying us."

It has been my wonder ever since, how I ever got through the remainder of the ceremony, for I was really choked with smothered laughter. But I knew that Abinidab's keen eye was upon me; and I suspected that any dereliction on my part might call down imprecations from him, so I controlled myself, and went on.

"As an acknowledgment of your desire to enter into the holy bonds of matrimony, you will take one another by the right hand."

Now came a most ludicrous scratching and scrambling, in an attempt at obedience. Neither of the parties seemed to be entirely sure which was their right hand; and as Abinidab was

done. He'll want to see us, I know, by the time we've beat down there agin this wind."

They started for the door, but Abinidab seeming to remember that he had not paid for this ceremony which had pleased him so well, turned back, saying —

"You wait a minit, Sal; I haint been up to the captain's office yet, to settle;" and turning to me he said, abruptly —

"How much do you ax?"

"Anything that the parties choose to give," I replied. "I never set a price on such service."

"Wa'll neow, that's a queer way of doin business, it seems to me."

While he was speaking he thrust his hands deep into his pockets, first on one side, then on the other. Then felt in his coat pockets, and finally proceeded to the vest pockets, turning each, wrong side out in its succession, and muttering to himself —

"Wa'll neow, that is a pretty piece of business, if I've lost that ere bill the ole man gin me."

He was about to give up in despair, when suddenly he bethought him that he had put it into the watch pocket of his vest. He was delighted at finding it again, and he thrust it into my hand with the air of a man conferring a fortune upon another.

I received it thankfully, thinking that this was the last act in this ludicrous drama, and that the opportunity was now come for us to be alone, and enjoy its memory. But not so. My guest showed no inclination to leave He stood before me, with an eager look on his countenance, which it was impossible for me to interpret. I grew embarrassed under it, and turned away, hoping that he would imitate my example, and thus close the interview; but this formed no part of his intention. Taking a quick step toward me, he asked, sharply —

"Aint there no change a comin'?"

"Yes," said I, only too glad to know the cause of the delay, and that it could be so easily obviated. "How much change do you want?"

"Wa'll about a dollar, I reckon. I shouldn't think you ought to ax more'n a dollar for a little job like that, that didn't take you more'n two minutes to do. Wont a dollar do ye? If it wont, jest say so, and I'll give you more, for I aint agoin' to be mean about a thing of this sort, specially when I've got such a gal as Sal, into the bargain."

I looked at the bill which he had given me. It was two dollars. I gave him a dollar from my purse as quickly as possible, and he departed evidently in the best of humor. I threw the bill into Nell's lap, when the door closed, saying as

audibly as I could, amid my convulsions of laughter—

"Here is our first perquisite. Our salary is one thousand and one dollars this year, certain."

CHAPTER VII.

THE marvellous wedding was over, and we who had witnessed it, were left with our memories for future pleasure.

Nor was this, by any means, all the result of blessing which was gleaned by our household, as recompense for that stormy evening's entertainment. Abinidab's dollar proved to be a bill with magical properties.

John, who had been taken into the council beforehand, and informed what use was to be made of the wedding fee, said immediately on the departure of the parties —

"That dollar is the 'Aladdin's Lamp,' which shall bring to me the treasure that the future has stored up for me. It shall pay my fare to Boston, and once there, I will struggle hand to hand with fate, as many a friendless boy has done before me."

Nell replied —

"God bless you, my son, for the resolution. We cannot tell what golden fruit may ripen on your tree of life, when the harvest-time is come. Many a younger and fainter heart has battled alone in this great conflict, and come off conqueror."

The resolution was taken. In a moment's time, our purposeless, aimless boy, who had floated, heretofore, like a bubble on the river of life, assumed his place as a drop in the current. Henceforth he was to be a living force. He was no longer drifting idly with the tide, like a useless bauble whose only fate is to be broken ere it reached the sea.

On so slight hinges do the doors swing which usher us from one department of this strange life to another. We sit and wait for some great event to startle us from our *nonchalance*, and point us to prosperity, but our waiting is in vain.

Anon, some little accident of life occurs, some trifling incident which yesterday we might have contemplated without a quickened pulse. But to-day it is our destiny. It takes us with a vice-like grasp, and shoves us into action. Life no longer to us glimmers and sparkles like the shining surface over which, for so many years, we have watched our mirrored reflection. We are afloat with its tide, and we must struggle and be strong.

By the morning train, on the following Monday, John left us for Boston. He had no acquaintance or friend in the city. No one to direct him in seeking employment. No one to counsel him as to the best means of finding a place. He had an honest heart and a willing hand, and with these alone, he undertook the battle of life.

I know of no way that I can give you so good an idea of those first struggling weeks, as by transcribing a few of his first letters home.

The first one was written on Wednesday morning following the Monday on which he left us. There was manifest throughout it, a veil of artificial joy spread over a background of doubtful shadow. But let me not anticipate. The letter ran thus: —

"DEAR MOTHER:

"I did not write you by yesterday's mail, as I hoped by waiting, to have better tidings to communicate. I ought not to insinuate that I have *bad* tidings to-day. Any one who is well and has blue sky over his head, the solid ground under his feet, and the assurance in his heart that God is over all, *ought* to be happy. I am trying to keep cheerful, but I must confess that my circumstances are not very favorable ones to promote good nature. I am pursuing my for-

tune as Abinidab did matrimony, 'under difficulties.'

"On Monday, after I arrived here, I set myself diligently at work looking for a situation.

"I wanted a place (if it was possible to get such an one), as bookkeeper in a wholesale house. I went from place to place, losing no time, and presenting my claims as modestly as I knew how, throughout the entire day. I couldn't seem to impress Boston at all with the idea that I was necessary to its well-being. Crowds drifted, and hurried, and jostled one another in their eager haste, to attend to the claims of commerce.

"The anxious marts of trade seemed to have pressed everybody into their service but me,—who longed so to obey their behests; me, who, before night, grew so weary and worn, that I would have taken an opportunity to have done almost any honest work. But no door opened through which I could see the first ray of light.

"I think I shall never forget the desolate, discouraged feeling which crept over me when the darkness came that night. So many hearts beating near me, yet not one beating for me. So many home lights peeping out into the drear darkness, yet not one inviting me to share its cheer, or even offering me a shelter for my head. I thought of you, dear mother, and of all

the loved ones at home. How many happy evenings came to my mind, that we have spent together in the days gone by. We too have gathered round a home fire, closed our shutters, and left poor wanderers out in the cold and darkness without giving them a single thought, or heart-beat of pity. Having had the experience of that dreary night, it does not seem to me that I can ever be as thoughtless again. When next I have a home, and am gathered with those I love beneath its shelter, I will not forget, I am sure, with the coming of the night, to breathe a prayer to the heavenly Father for the desolate-hearted.

"I had so little money with me (you remember how wilfully I disregarded your counsel about taking money), that I hesitated a long time whether I would stay in the street, or try to secure some cheap lodging.

"I sat down on the steps of a church, and endeavored, for a long time, to compose my mind. I tried to think of the eternal verities, to fill my mind with the belief that God reigns, and watches over every creature that he has made; I said to myself, "He careth for the sparrows," and will surely not forget me.

"All these things I repeated with the vain endeavor to fill my heart with them. It could not be done. I forever recurred to the certainty

—which was not an ambiguous trouble far away—that I was friendless, homeless, and alone. Had I been out on the quiet hills, under the open sky, where I could have felt the sweet, pure breath of heaven on my brow, I believe it would have soothed the throbbing pain. I think I could have felt the love of God more nearly. As it was, the sunlight of his face was hid from me by the shadow of the city walls, and his voice of blessing could not reach me, since the multitude of human voices intervened.

"I am not ashamed to tell you, mother, that I wept that night; I know your mother-heart will understand my feeling, and not smile derisively, or think me unmanly, because of this confession.

"I would not pain you by painting this desolate picture, if I were not going to tell you that a more cheerful spirit came to me with the next morning's light.

"I did not stay on the church steps all night. I began to feel very chilly, and fearing that I should take cold, and make more expense than I saved, I concluded to seek shelter. I went to a hotel, took a room and went to bed. But having done this, I did not find myself much more comfortable than I had been in the open air. I could not sleep. It was my spirit that was chilled, and not my body. No amount of covering could have warmed my heart that night.

"I watched the darkness out, with sleepless eyes, and felt thankful for the first faint rays of the dawning. I hoped the day had something in store for me, and I welcomed its coming as I would have done the face of a friend. I left my bed early, went to a restaurant and ate a light breakfast, after which I took up my search again for employment.

"The returning light had brought me a braver heart. I said to myself, there must be *something* that I can do, in a city like this. I will keep a good courage, and strive till I find it.

"By this time I had ceased to be particular as to the *kind* of work that I should do. I only made one proviso in my mind. That was, that the work should be honest, — something that should help the world forward, or at least not block the wheels of its progress.

"A gentleman in a dry goods' store where I inquired for a place, told me that there was a vacant clerkship at No. 12 —— Street, where a young man could get a good salary, and not work very hard for his money. I made haste to find it with my heart full of hope; but, to my great disappointment, when I reached No. 12 —— Street, I found a large liquor store, and the place that they proposed to put me, was behind a bar, where I was to retail destruction and misery to my fellow-creatures, for eight hundred

dollars a year. Could I accept such a proposition? No! lonely, and anxious, and desolate as I was, I would not accept such a place as that. I said to myself, 'I can lie down and die for want of sustenance, if need be, and by dying honestly, I shall not have made the world poorer; but I cannot live a dishonorable life, and have the bitter thought forever recurring to me, that the tides of civilization roll backward under my hand.'

"I said, to the pressing entreaty of the proprietor, (for he seemed very anxious indeed that I should stay,) 'No; I would cut off my right hand, sooner than occupy it with such work.'

"He grew excited and angry at my plainness of speech, and was about to thrust me out of his presence, when a gentleman present interfered, saying —

"'I would like to have a little talk with you, young friend. It seems to me that you are made of the right kind of metal. I have had a good deal to do with young men in my day, and I can tell by the ring of the coin whether it be true or false. What do you want to do? Perhaps I can be of assistance to you.'

"I proceeded at once to tell him what my desires were. I stated frankly the extremity in which I found myself placed, to which he immediately replied —

"'I am glad to have found you. If you are satisfied to make a small beginning, I think I can put you at work this very day.'

"I told him I would be willing to do anything for the present, by which I could earn my bread honestly. He told me to call at No. 22 —— Street, at two P. M., where we could finish the arrangement.

"Of course I was punctual to the hour, and found Mr. Paton waiting for me. He asked me if I would take a place in a store as under clerk, where I should have only three hundred dollars a year at first. I replied that I would, and accordingly I was at once installed in my new quarters. I do not find the place comfortable. There are ten clerks in the establishment beside myself, and they do not seem to try to make the place very pleasant for me. I sleep in the store, and board at an eating-house, and have altogether, a most unhomelike prospect before me. But I am determined that I will be contented; that I will glean comfort from rugged pathways, and mayhap they will grow smoother for me by and by.

"I hope you will write me very often; for, next to the sight of the dear home-faces, a letter from home will be the most welcome thing. I have written you a long letter, and I must close it now, for other duties are waiting me.

"Give my dearest love to all the home friends. Share the kisses which I send, with the children, and let me be duly remembered to all outside of the home circle, who care for, and inquire for me. With kindliest regards for all, but above all, for you, dear mother, I remain,

"Your loving son, JOHN."

"P. S. In looking over my letter, I find that I have permitted a miserable sombre hue to creep over it. I am ashamed that it is so. If I had time I would burn it, and write you a long, cheerful letter in its place. But as I have not time to write another, and I know you will feel very anxious if you do not hear from me to-day, I will send this along, imperfect as it is, begging you in these, its last words, to think of me, not as the miserable complainer which the letter represents, but as a young man with health, a hopeful heart, moderately happy with his present circumstances, and expecting to be much more so in the future.

"Again, lovingly yours.

J. M. G."

I think every member of the family circle was tearful, when this letter was read aloud. We had missed John, oh, so much, during the days that he had been gone. We had felt so anxious

to hear of his welfare. If he had spent nights of sleeplessness, we, too, had watched the stars out, with a dreary waiting for the dawn. We had never, through all the cares of our children's infancy, had nights half as full of anxious thought, as these had been. So long as they were all with us, so long as our little ones were gathered in the home nest, and we could supply their wants, watch over their sufferings, and alleviate their pain by our tender care, we were comparatively content. But the time had come when we could no longer do this. Our fledglings were trying their own wings.

The spell was broken. The winds of adversity were blowing coldly about the hearts that we had warmed and sheltered so long in the bosom of our love. We were anxious and sick at heart. Had we not remembered that God was over all, that he cared more tenderly for our dear ones than we were able, even in our most anxious moments, to ask or think, we know not how we could have borne the trial.

This new experience brought again to our minds the query, How are those who have never learned to trust God and rely on his strength, ever sustained through the emergencies of life? They could not be, surely, were it not that the tender Father forgives their rebellion, and, listening to the cry of their wounded spirits, gives

them help, when their lips will not utter the pleading entreaty for deliverance.

On Saturday of the same week, we received another letter from our wanderer. It ran thus: —

"DEAR FATHER: —

"Two days have elapsed since I sent thoughts home, clad with ink and paper, but I trust you will not therefore think that winged messengers from my brain have not visited you through almost every moment of my waking hours, and oftentimes, from out my world of dreams.

"You will all be glad to learn, that I am feeling much more cheerful than when I wrote you last. I have reason to feel so, as my prospects have brightened materially since then. I have not yet been here a week, but I have been promoted in this short time, and I have a prospect of another advance in a few months, if I am faithful. You will wonder, I know, at this, and think I have fallen into the hands of a curious employer, who puts a young man in a situation one day, and advances him the same week to a higher one; so I must tell you how it came about. The day after I came, the head clerk brought a pile of dress silks down to my counter, just after we opened the store in the morning. He threw them down hastily, saying as he did so —

"'There's a fine lot of silks. I hope you will sell them all before night.'

"I responded, cheerfully, 'I hope so,' and proceeded at once to sort them out and arrange them in the most advantageous manner possible. In doing so, I discovered that some of them were slightly damaged. They had evidently been wet in transportation, and though they were not entirely ruined, they were injured to the degree of not being first-class silks, and I felt that they should not be sold as such. I went immediately to Mr. Ames, the clerk who had brought them to me, and said—

"'Mr. Ames, those silks that you brought to my counter, just now, are damaged goods.'

"He looked at me with a peculiar smile, and replied—

"'You are not telling me any news.'

"I waited a moment for him to proceed, but seeing him not inclined to do so, I asked—

"'What shall I do with them?'

"'Do what I told you, when I carried them to you; sell them all before night, if you can possibly do it.'

"'But—'

"'None of your super-honest "buts" here. Go and do what I tell you.'

"I replied, 'I will not be interrupted, and prevented from saying what I have got to say about

these silks. They are not first-class goods, and ought not to be sold as such.'

"'Pooh! you are over nice,' said he; 'not one person in fifty would notice those spots in buying the dresses. They wouldn't find it out until they got home, and then they would contrive some way to cut round and trim over the spots, so the dresses will look just as well in the end. You trust a woman for getting her neck out of a yoke, if it fits ever so tight. They are all the more shrewd about these matters, for they don't want to own it, when they have been cheated.'

"'That wouldn't make the sin any less in me, if I sold these goods for full price, knowing they were not worth it,' I replied.

"'You have got a real country conscience,' said he, smiling again, his peculiarly derisive smile.

"'You cannot turn me from my purpose by ridicule,' I replied. 'It is wrong to sell the silks as you desire them sold, and I will not do it.'

"'I will have no more words with you,' said he, angrily. 'Go and do as I bid you, or your disobedience will cost you your place.'

"'I cannot do it,' I said, firmly. 'If I am turned into the street before night, I will deal justly.'

"'You heard what I said,' was his only reply.

"I turned away with a heavy heart. Was I then to be thrust out of employment, so hardly obtained, and the crumb of bread snatched from my mouth, almost before I had begun to realize that I was fed, because, forsooth, I would not defraud my fellow-man?

"I would not falter. I remembered your teachings, dear father. I knew mother would bless me for an honest purpose, and I felt that I would rather go back to her presence hungry and poorly clad, if I could carry a pure heart, than with the wealth of Crœsus and the outward adornments of king Solomon, if they clothed a shabby spirit.

"As I turned to go back to my counter, I noticed that Mr. Paton was in the store. He was standing but a little way from me, and I thought (though I was by no means sure) that he must have heard the conversation.

"He stood with his back toward me, and was talking in an unconcerned manner with one of his clerks.

"I returned to my counter without attracting his attention. Once more safe in my own inclosure, I experienced a strange conflict of feeling. Temptation beset me sorely. The first flush of indignant feeling was past. The first impulse to right was over, and I had come to the state of

mind in which I weighed possibilities, and counted the cost of results. Ought I to be ashamed to own to you, dear father, that I hesitated a few moments, and dallied with the tempter?

"On one side of me lay the desolate, dreary city, with its unwilling gifts of labor, into whose unwelcome jaws I was destined to fall, if I persisted in my honest purpose. I knew that I must go away, and probably wander for days unsheltered and hungry, in the street. I looked out of the window at the cheerless prospect. There was a dreary storm that morning, and the rain and hail, and snow, always a pitiful trinity, seemed more desolate than I ever saw them before. I can endure such a storm in the country, where the warm, soft bosom of the earth receives the chill message descending from the sky. When God's great law of recompense is *manifest* among his works, I rest content. So when I see his broad fields and open acres receive his severest chastisements with joy, I know that he blesses them even while he seems to punish.

"But I cannot see his love-labors so plainly in the city. The hail and snow only come to make the despicable black mud of the street more filthy and unsightly. Multitudes of little barefooted children go crying by with frost-bitten

toes, looking with their hungry, pleading eyes to heaven, to catch the first ray of sunlight which shall pierce the storm,

"Perhaps the Father sees them, and answers their cry in ways that I know not of. Mayhap some day when the veil which covers my sin-dimmed eyes shall grow thinner, I shall see and recognize the blessings which are hidden in God's ministrations to the city. On the day of which I write, I confess I saw nothing but desolation in his dealings with us here.

"This dreary fate lay before me on one side; on the other there was — if not joy — at least a present respite from suffering. I was under comfortable shelter, well warmed and sufficiently fed. By a simple trick of trade, I could keep my place. I should not have to speak a word, — no actual lie would have to pass my lips. The sin would be of omission and not commission. I queried whether God would see an overt act of wrong in me if I yielded. He saw my situation and knew my extremity. Would he consider me guilty if I held the lines of his law loosely? I knew by the way my protest had been received that this style of deceit was not unusual in city trade. The tempter whispered, 'All your fellow-tradesmen do so, why not you? If you forsake this place it will be to repeat the same experience in another, and perhaps endure bitter suffering from want.'

"I had begun to listen to the syren voice, and I know not how far it might have led me down the path which leads to darkness, had I not been roused from my revery by the appearance, at my counter, of a morning customer. Her looks and manner indicated business. Such persons, who really mean to trade, and would make a clerk's attentions an object, often come in the morning, and quite often on stormy mornings. There is as much difference between this class of customers and the gaudy butterflies who swarm our places of trade in the afternoon, as there is between the dahlia whose only autumn recompense for heaven and earth's summer nursing, is a cluster of gaudy blossoms, and the rich fruit-tree, whose abundant answer of thanksgiving loads the air with fragrance and makes the earth glad with its overwhelming cheer.

"The lady whose entry I have noted, came directly to my counter and asked to look at winter silks. I turned to my shelves, and laid before her some of those which I had just received, together with a large number of others, which I knew to be genuine. My hand trembled so, as I laid the condemned silks before her, that I was actually frightened at my own condition. If I had been a thief, and the goods had been my first stolen property, I could not have acted more guilty. I was wretched. But I said to my-

self, perhaps I shall yet be saved, — probably she will prefer some of the unsoiled pieces, and I shall be alone with my temptation yet a little longer, before I am thrust over the precipice of sin.

"I handled the silks deftly. I threw the spotted pieces underneath as much as possible, and covered them with what I knew to be genuine and good. But in doing so, one of them was exposed, and immediately my customer said —

"'There's a beauty. Let me look at that purple silk, if you please.'

"I pretended not to understand her, and gave for her admiration one of the upper tier of silks, but she rejected it, saying —

"'No; the bright purple underneath is the one I want.'

"There was no alternative. My time of trial had come. I took the silk out with a fainting heart. The piece that she called for, was not as badly spotted as some of them; indeed, the imperfections were few and slight, and the darkness of the day favored the deceit. I have since tried the same piece of silk in a strong light, and found the spots, only by searching for them. But that morning they appeared to my eye large and bright, and they stood out before me like accusing spirits. I could not endure it; I was about to speak, when the tempter whispered —

"'Wait; she may not take that pattern. If she does accept it, it will be time then for you to explain its defects. If she does not, you can gain time to think, before you will have another customer to put your strength of purpose to the test.'

"I waited, but each moment made my case more hopeless. She liked the silk, thought it would make a splendid dress, and with her slender fingers, she shifted the rich folds admiringly.

"I took another piece of purple from the shelves, and exhibited it with my most skilful handling, saying, while I did so —

"'Wouldn't you like this piece better? I believe it would please you better in the end, than that.'

"I smile since then, to think what pleading tones my voice assumed. If I had been begging for my life, I could not have done so with more earnest entreaty.

"In one sense I was begging for life. The term of my happy, innocent life depended on her answer. And why should we live, or call existence life after we have passed our time of joy. Had I have sold that damaged silk that morning, I should have been adrift on a treacherous sea. There would have been no barrier between me and the deepest depths of deceit. Once having

crossed that rubicon, I should never have struggled back to the shores of peace.

"Had she accepted my proposal, and taken the other silk without question, I should have had time for farther struggling, and I know not how the contest might have ended.

"Long wrestling with the tempter sometimes weakens us to the point of yielding, when a sudden exertion of our strength might swing us clear of the pitfall. I did not turn the wheel of fortune for myself, but, thank God, it was turned for me, and I was saved. The lady replied, looking me directly in the eye with a searching look as she did so —

"'I prefer this piece; and, as it is a higher priced silk than the one you hold, I see no reason why you should wish me to purchase the other. If there is a reason, will you give it?'

"The way was open now, and plain.

"'There is a reason,' I said, firmly. 'The piece you hold in your hand is slightly damaged, and it would not be right for me to sell it for a perfect piece, knowing as I do that it is not such.'

"The moment the words had passed my lips I was happy. Surely, the angels who came and ministered unto Christ when his bitter trial was over, have not deserted the world wholly since then. We, poor, struggling mortals, when we

are tempted like as he was, and crush our enticing foes without sin, leave our besetting satans behind us, and the angel Peace comes in to take up his abode with us.

"I have never seen a happier moment than the one of which I write. I think I could have borne hunger and cold, to a bitter degree — had they come as the result of that act — without much suffering. I know that martyr fires bring not the bitter pain with their devouring flames, which we have been wont to imagine. When we are really 'persecuted for righteousness sake,' the blessing which heaven sends to us, a thousand times more than compensates for the hardest pain that man can cause us to suffer.

"My customer dropped the silk immediately, which she held in her hand, and looked at me in astonishment.

"'Really,' she said, 'you are an exception among clerks. I have never met with this degree of honesty in a salesman before. You will be likely to see my face at this counter very often in the future.'

"I bowed my thanks for her compliment, and she proceeded to look over the remaining silks, purchased two very expensive pieces, and left me with a kind good morning.

"As she departed, Mr. Paton approached me. I expected hard words and a peremptory dismis-

sal from his service. Instead of that, he said to me, kindly —

"'You are having some trouble, I see, about your silks. I will meet you and Mr. Ames this evening at six, in the counting-room, when we will settle the matter.'

"'But,' said I, 'in the mean time, what shall I do with the goods?'

"'Let them remain on your shelves. I will give you further orders about them this evening.'

"His words were calm, his manner undisturbed. I had no clue to his motive in asking the interview. He had evidently been watching me throughout the whole contest. He was now to take the day to sit in judgment on the case, and at evening we were summoned to receive his verdict.

"The hours of the day crept slowly by. My spirit was peaceful and happy, but I felt very anxious to know my fate. As the clock struck six, I lifted the latch of the counting-room door. Mr. Paton was sitting at the desk, writing. He bade me be seated, and he continued his work. We waited there a quarter of an hour. Mr. Paton looked at his watch impatiently. Another quarter elapsed, and Mr. Ames had not arrived. Then Mr. Paton closed his book, and said —

"'I will not keep you waiting longer for Mr.

Ames. He and I will settle our matters alone. What I want to say to you is, that I find to-day new cause for trusting and esteeming you. I have been in trade for twenty years; and all that time I have made honesty an unvarying rule. I do not swerve from it myself, and I demand it imperatively of the persons in my employ. Though Mr. Ames has been a long time with me, I have never before detected him in any remissness of this character. As I said before, he and I must settle that matter between ourselves. As a token of the estimation in which I hold your action, I have increased your salary to five hundred dollars; shall give you the fifth clerk's place, and the promise of better things by and by, if our future acquaintance prove as satisfactory as our past has been.'

"I thanked him as well as my full heart would allow, and returned to my labor.

"I should have written you this good news yesterday, but we were so busy, I had no moment of time. To-night, I steal the hour to write, from my sleep, but I am so happy, I can well afford to spare it. I know how happy this letter will make you all, and the privilege of communicating so much joy, rests me more than sleep.

"With dearest love for you all at home,

"I remain your affectionate son, JOHN."

I cannot represent in words, the happiness that we received from this letter. We give ourselves to great joy and rejoicing, when the news of the victory of armies reaches us, — when a battle with carnal weapons has been won, — how much more can we rejoice when the sword of the Spirit has conquered, and innumerable angels join our notes of joy. Our firstborn had wrestled with the tempter, and from the contest had come forth victorious, with salvation written on his banner, and we, who loved him best, felt like strewing palm-branches for his feet, and crowning him with never-fading laurels.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE had hardly realized that our summer joys had been stolen from us, before the winter winds were clamoring at our casements.

In the country, when we have grown familiar with every tree on the hillside, and can almost say that every leaf has the face of a friend, we watch the kisses of the autumn wind with a jealous eye. We know from day to day, how many of our summer treasures have faded, and like Rachel weeping for her children, we sit in sadness midst our ruined joys.

But in the city where a single meagre grass-plot is all that we can boast of summer pride, our narrow streets and warm walls, protect it from the first encroachments of the autumn. It struggles to retain its greenness, as if God were loth to take away this single token of his smile from the desolate hearts of his city children; and anon, before we are aware that it is in

danger, the winter snows have hidden it from our sight. Our next neighbor across the way, has donned her frost plumage, and is flaunting her feathers down the street, and our children with red noses, and pimpled arms come in with "Great expectations" written on their faces.

The winter has indeed come. We must meet its grim embraces, and welcome it, as best we may.

Such were our thoughts and feelings on the December morning of which I write.

I had gone to my study, and closing the door, had made it fast with a heavy bolt; as if I could shut out all thoughts of recreation when the door was once bolted against my household joys. The merry sleigh-bells were jingling in the street. I could not shut out their music from my ears, and with every tinkling sound, came the memory that Nell and the children had been promised a sleigh-ride before this snow was gone. The sun was shining warmly, and I knew that every moment endangered the fulfilment of my promise. But it was Friday, and my sermon was only half done. I must not think of going to ride until that was finished. Hope whispered, that I could finish it before evening; and perhaps with the additional charm of night, we might draw the cosey robes about us, and glide away with a charming forgetfulness of care. Or, even if I

failed to finish the sermon before night, there was another day before Sunday; I could trust a part of the labor, to its unborn hours.

I would finish it if I could; for my joy I knew would be greater in the ride, if there was no undone duty *left behind*, — as the eye of sense would say — (and yet, as I should see with the eye of my spirit, carried with me,) and lying heavy on my heart.

I sat down to my table, resolutely, dipped my pen in the ink, and bent over my paper with an intent purpose and look, as if I could send a photograph from my brain into the sermon, and find it another day, like a picture of light, ready to exhibit to the eager eyes of my friends.

I sat and waited long and patiently for the thought to come, but no apparition of it could I win from my dull brain. It appeared to be one of the "impossible days;" one of those times when we fancy that we are left to grope in darkness, without the help of our guiding angels, who, on other days so kindly flood our brains with light.

An hour passed. A few pages of dull, spiritless manuscript lay before me, as the only result of its hard struggle. I rose and went to the window, to see if perchance I might catch some ray of inspiration from without.

A sleigh had just driven to my door, and a

gentleman from it was ringing my door-bell. His manner indicated business, and as I expected, immediately after he was admitted, I was summoned to meet him in the parlor.

He had come for me to attend a funeral in the country, twenty miles away. I was often interrupted by such calls, as no other minister of our faith lived near me. I had frequently given four days of the seven to attending funerals outside of my own parish limits, leaving me only two days for my Sunday's preparation, and all the accompanying duties of the week. But I could never find it in my heart to deny these calls. I could not make up my mind that my sphere of duty was limited to the bounds which man had set about me, and named my parish. My work, I felt, was Christ's work, and I must go to those in sorrow, and lighten, if I might by any word or tender sympathy of mine, the burden of their grief. So thinking humanity everywhere had a right to look to me for help, and I, however much I might be inconvenienced by this extra draught on my energies, had no right to say them nay.

I went to every call, however remote, or difficult of access the place might be, and accepted without a murmur the exposure and hardship to which I was often subjected. In this case, the place, though only twenty miles distant, was more inaccessible than many another would have been a hundred miles away.

It was into a very hilly region that I was to go. The roads were narrow and difficult at any season of the year, and during the winter they were many times quite impassable. The gentleman who came for me, reported the travelling as unusually good with the late snow; and his proposition was, that I, taking the first train on Saturday morning, should meet him eight miles above our city, at —— depot, the nearest station to the place where the funeral was to be held. From that station, I was to be conveyed in a sleigh, and returned again after the funeral, in time to take the evening train for home.

I agreed to the arrangement, though I saw that it would necessitate my working extremely hard in my preparation for Sunday, and would unfit me for the labor of the day, through the extreme weariness which such a trip must bring. But as I said before, I had one rule for such cases, and without hesitation, I promised to go.

My visitor being thoroughly chilled by his ride, remained sometime warming himself, and resting for the return trip.

I did not get back into my study until nearly noon. There lay my unfinished sermon before me. I had some preparation to make for the funeral service, as I had been informed that it was the custom in the section to which I was going, to *preach* on such occasions. All this

work was to be done before I slept that night. No more dulness could be tolerated in my brain that day.

I sat down to my writing-table, and it was wonderful what a change had taken place in my mental activity since I sat there before. The pressure of necessity was upon me now, and every fibre was awake to the call.

We can do a great deal when we are compelled to work, that we should never get accomplished if the currents of our life ran smoothly. Friction wakes the electricity in the brain, and the fire of thought springs forth at our bidding. Let none make the excuse for avoiding mental labor, that they are already over busy. You shall find your mind like the widow's cruse, ever better filled, as you are exhausting its supplies.

It is God's great law written on spiritual things. The one positive evidence, that the connection is unbroken between His great unfailing fountain of spirit life, and our feeble conduits which flow from it. Our bodily life grows weaker, exhausts, fails us, and our flesh dies, because it has no kinship with the heavens; but our spiritual life shall remain a living joy when the earth and skies are passed away.

I did not rise from my table again until my sermon for Sunday was finished.

I laid aside, till a more convenient season, the half-finished manuscript, over which the chariot wheels of my thought had driven so heavily in the weary morning hours, and commenced a new sermon from the text, "Be ye not weary in well-doing: for in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not." As I before said, I finished it at a sitting. I preached it afterward to a large audience. Whether a single one of the many were improved thereby, I have no means of knowing. But of this much I can affirm, the *writing* of the sermon blessed my own heart. I believe I was a more useful, and a more patiently happy man, because of the hours in which my thoughts dwelt upon that theme.

But let me not omit the record of the hours which intervened between the writing and preaching of that sermon on patient labor. I had immediate need of the lessons which my heart learned that day.

After my sermon was finished, I went through with the preparatory work necessary for the funeral, which occupied me until a late hour of the night. When I had finished my task, and was getting ready for bed, I noticed that a wild storm was driving against the windows. Sudden and fearful gusts of wind, softened only by the feathery snow they bore, beleagured our castle walls. I saw that a dreary night was before

us, and the necessity, of course, of a trying morrow to follow in its wake.

I feared the storm might make the burial impossible, and I shuddered at thought of that lonely, mourning house, away among the hills, with the chill of winter without, and the chill of death wrapping all its casements, and spreading through its lonely chambers within.

"Let us bury our dead out of our sight," was the petition of one of old; and the burdened, sobbing heart of humanity has borne down the wailing prayer through the centuries.

To it, God's answer is, usually, "amen — so let it be," and into the loving bosom of the earth, we give what erst was ours to shelter and protect. But sometimes amid the wildest convulsions of nature, it seems as if our voices of anguish failed to pierce the storm, and God had not heard our cry for help. Then we are compelled to keep for days in our desolate households, the body of a beloved one which was once our joy and pride, but which has now become the wraith of all our hope and happiness.

Thinking these thoughts, and fearing these fears, I tossed restlessly on my bed, until near the morning, before I fell asleep. When I awoke the storm had lulled. The sun had driven away the last vestige of cloud from the sky, and was pouring down an intense, direct stream of

light and heat upon the earth. The air was keen and piercing, and heavy drifts of snow lay in every direction about us.

I rose, but little refreshed by the passage of the night; made a hasty toilet, and prepared for my journey. Nell said —

"Surely you will not undertake to go twenty miles, under these circumstances, to attend a funeral."

"I shall most certainly undertake it," I replied. "Whether I reach my destination is a matter of great uncertainty; but I shall persevere as far as it is possible, since I have promised to go."

I made my way to the depot under great difficulties, reaching there just as the cars were ready to start. But eight miles of my route lay in the direction of the railroad. The conductor encouraged me by saying, that most of our route would probably be unobstructed, as it was over high ground, and the wind had blown in such direction as to sweep the snow into the valleys beyond. I took courage, and we moved slowly on. We reached the depot where the sleigh was to meet me, about half an hour after the time that we should have been there; but the sleigh had not yet arrived. I was not surprised at this. I knew that it must be with great exertion and loss of time that they would be able to

reach there at all, through those wild mountain gorges. I had prepared my mind for long waiting, but I had really hoped to have more favorable surroundings. It was a depot, a mile from residences. They were evidently not expecting any one to tarry there in a morning like the present, and no fire had been made in the depot building. I had been sitting by the stove in the cars, and was very warm when I left them. I felt that this sudden change would be sure to give me a severe cold, if the waiting should be long continued. I did not dare to leave the depot, lest, in doing so, I should miss those who were to call for me,

There was no help for it, but to drive off the cold by exercise as well as I could, until I was called for. I did not feel as if I had any strength to spare for physical exertions, but it was, as I said, my only expedient, and I adopted it with a will. I walked, ran, and leaped, until I was obliged to sit down from sheer exhaustion, and yield my tired body to the exposure of the piercing wind which searched my very vitals.

Fortunately, not long after I sat down, I heard the cheerful voices of the men, who were just emerging from a deep cut through the hills, and making their way as fast as possible toward me. They had preceded the sleigh in which I was to return, by an ox-sled, and ten men with

spades and shovels had been at work since midnight, to open the way over which we were to go. It was now nine o'clock. The funeral was appointed for eleven, and we had twelve miles to go. We took courage, on being told how faithfully the men had done their work; and by their assurance that we could make our way back in very short time, as the deep drifts were opened, and they had broken the road well all the way with their heavy sled. We were thankful to be again in motion, and though our progress was slow, and most of the way very difficult, we reached our destination at twelve o'clock.

We were surprised to find that quite a large concourse of people had assembled, to pay, by their presence, this last tribute of respect to the dead.

It had been, of course, with great labor and painstaking that they had been able to get there; but through it all, they had come, thus adding another testimonial, that people in the country have keener sympathies, and make more sacrifices to share each others' joy and sorrow, than do those who have been tutored in selfishness by the air of cities.

It was an old-fashioned farm-house where the funeral was held, and the rooms were large; but every place was filled with neighbors and friends who were waiting reverently for the message of consolation.

The place prepared for me to stand, was in the doorway, between two of the largest rooms. One of them was heated by a large air-tight stove which stood near the door. In the other there was no means of warming. Now, as the day was very cold, it became necessary to make the single stove supply heat for both rooms. Accordingly, a terribly hot fire was made, which was my nearest neighbor when I rose to speak. The service occupied an hour, during which time I was exposed to that furious heat. Every pore was opened, and my clothing literally saturated with perspiration when I sat down. Immediately after the remarks, we followed the body to the burial. Our way lay over a bleak hill, and the north wind cultivated a much closer intimacy with my shivering flesh than was agreeable or profitable to me. I think I was never so uncomfortably chilled in my life. The wind had been steadily rising since morning, and it was blowing now with an unusual fierceness. The graveyard was so covered and banked with snow, that we groped about a long time before we found the open grave.

It was overfilled, even heaped with the compact mass of snow. We had to wait until it was cleared, and then in the twice-dug grave we placed all that was mortal of the loved one gone, and turned our faces homeward. It was now

full time that I should be returning to the depot, as the afternoon train left at half-past five, and there was no time to lose, if I reached it.

So without nourishment, or rest from the fatigue already endured, we set out to make our way through the stalwart difficulties which we were to meet on our return.

They seemed to have redoubled, since morning. Perhaps our wearied condition made them appear more formidable in our eyes. Certain I am, I never remember to have looked on a more disheartening sight, than those long unbroken snow-fields, which stretched away before us as far as the eye could reach. Fences were buried, save here and there a place where they peeped out from the drifts; and at long intervals, a house, or tree, or some waymark, indicated to us the path we were seeking. The road that had been opened in the morning was filled up again, so that the way was difficult, in some places almost impossible to find. Had it not been Saturday, and had not the necessity of being at home, to do my Sunday's work, been pressing upon me, I should have tarried until another day, before trying to reach home. But the demand was urgent. The command of duty was ringing in my ears. I felt that I must obey it, and we toiled on. At first, we tried riding; then as the cold benumbed us, we got on our

feet, and walked; and at last when the time grew short, and the way (seemingly) long, we took our part with the laborers, and worked with a will at the monstrous drifts, which were continually obstructing the way of the horses.

When it was half-past five — the time that we were to have been at the depot — we were yet three miles away from it. I felt encouraged by the thought that the train must be late that night, as it had the same difficulties to encounter that were impeding our progress. Patiently we worked on. The night was approaching, and the home comforts rose up like a panorama of beauty, to lure us onward. As the darkness closed over us, and our discomforts grew almost unbearable, the dream of home was a light in our hearts, without which we could not have borne our sufferings. Do sin-wanderers' dreams of heaven, do for them, through all the dreary difficulties of life, what my dreams of home did for my desolate heart that night?

I have asked myself this question a great many times since, and I think the lesson of the dreary night had its uses in the after-work of my life. Many times since then, when I have been wearied with overmuch labor, and would fain have laid down the heavy burden, I have recalled that dreadful night, and thought "if such be the condition of sin-wanderers, I can surely afford to set a light in the window for them."

At eight o'clock we reached the depot. When we were in sight of it, on the top of the last hill, that we were to cross; the train came slowly struggling through the valley beneath us. Like a restive animal, it chafed and panted, and struggled on. Its one great, fiery, unblinking eye, looked at us fiercely, and threw its bright defiant light along the pure white snow. Could we reach it? We had not an eighth of the distance to go which separated the train from the depot, — and yet what impossibilities seemed to lie between us and it. A desperate strife began. The combatants were unequal in power, but one was almost desperate. On the one side, was the train, — a dull, dumb, senseless, unbreathing thing, unwearied and incapable of disappointment, — should it reach the desired goal before me, — me, living, conscious, desiring, determined?

No. I said to my companions, "You may turn back. I will reach that depot with my own feet before the train leaves."

The word once spoken, there was no recall; my mind once fixed, the result was sure. I felt at the moment, that I could annihilate time and space by my own force of will.

I accomplished my purpose. I reached the train, and stepped on to it just as it was moving off from the depot.

I was conscious when I opened the door of the car; but after that, there is a long blank in my life, of which my memory takes no cognizance.

The conductor of the train saw me as I stepped into the car. He judged from my appearance, that my strength was failing, and reached me just as I fell. From that moment I was entirely oblivious to all that was passing around me.

There chanced to be no person on the train that knew me; but, good Samaritans were there, who ministered to my needs, and did all they could to restore my waning life. A physician was among the passengers, who exerted himself wisely in my behalf. But for his timely aid, I have every reason to think, that that night would have been my last upon earth.

I write these testimonials to the kindness of my fellow-travellers, with the greatest pleasure. It was another evidence of the great loving bond of brotherhood which binds the whole human race together, and makes them, in the bitter extremities of life, as one family, loving and helping one another.

There was nothing to compel the crowd of strangers about me, to care for my well-being, save the Godlike impulse within, which drew them to me; but impelled by that, they cared for me as if I had been of their own kindred.

About my person, there was nothing to indicate

either my name or residence. I chanced to have very little money with me (a not unusual condition for a minister), and, as a consequence, I fell a helpless load upon the charity of strangers.

Let me here pause a moment in my narration to advise those who travel, to make it one of the indispensable parts of their work, in getting ready for a journey, to put in their purse, or, in some place about their person, a card with their name and full address, so that in case of sickness, or any accident, they may be properly provided for.

I know that to some this will seem a useless, and perhaps even a foolish precaution. They will cite to me a multitude of journeys that they, or their friends or neighbors have made, without any serious consequence ensuing from their disregard of this precaution.

I will answer them by calling their attention to any one of a multitude of accidents which have happened on steamboats or railroad trains, where, in the mass of crushed bodies, there would be found numbers so mutilated that they could never be recognized by friend or kindred.

That (as you are pleased to call it) foolish piece of paper, would have saved the terrible sorrow of those heart-broken friends who longed (as the single drop of consolation in this bitter cup of anguish) to bear their beloved dead home, and bury them with their kindred.

You are all liable to such accidents, and equally liable to have such fate befall you as was mine on the night of which I write. They had no means of ascertaining my destination, and, as the wisest expedient, they decided to leave me at Speedwell, at a hotel, which purpose they carried into execution; and I was sent, helpless and unconscious, to a public house, to be comparatively poorly cared for, in the very city, and almost the very street, where my anxious wife was agonizing in uncertainty about my fate. After the cars arrived, and she had decided that I had not come with them, she felt great anxiety to know what had befallen me. Her conclusion was, at last, that I must have been so detained by the snow, as not to have reached the depot in time for the train. Then she looked for me to come every moment until midnight, thinking that I should make the whole journey in a sleigh, and arrive at home as soon as the terrible condition of the roads would allow.

When the morning dawned and found her still watching in vain, she was in an agony of suspense regarding my fate. It was Sunday morning. I had always been very strict with myself about my Sunday service, never, unless under most extraordinary circumstances, absenting myself from the pulpit. For this reason Nell clung to the hope that I would come until the church

bell was done tolling. Then, when my coming could no longer be hoped for, my disappointed congregation wended their way homeward, and a special messenger was despatched to the place where the funeral had been held, to learn, if possible, the reason of my absence.

It was not, of course, until Monday, near night, that the messenger returned to Speedwell, and then, after all that weary waiting, my poor family were plunged deeper than ever in sorrow and anxiety by the message he brought.

"No tidings!" Ah, what bitterness and grief were in those words for my beloved ones. There is no trouble, I believe, like it. The human heart will endure almost an unlimited amount of suffering, if its troubles are of a *certain* character. When we *know* the extent of grief that has overtaken us, our spirits rise up to meet and endure. But suspense — that undefined, dreadful expectation of grief, of which we know not the magnitude; that rends the heart, and bows it like a reed before the winter blast.

After the return of the messenger, as soon as the result of his journey was made known, there was, of course, a good deal of talk and stir in the city at so uncommon an occurrence.

Whatever other reasons for complaint a minister may have, want of public attention is not one of his grievances. The ministers in a city are

always marked men. Every one, even the children, know them as they pass on the street. All, whether of their congregation or of another, feel an interest in the affairs of a working minister. He can have the satisfaction of knowing that his joys and sorrows are shared by many hearts. In more senses than the one, he can "neither live unto himself nor die unto himself."

The news circulated rapidly throughout the city, that one of its ministering servants was missing, and a variety of conjectures were indulged in, as to the probabilities of the strange event. Some of these conjectures were not particularly flattering to my self-esteem, when I afterward learned them; but as I had been so few months in the city, I had no high claim upon its esteem or trust, and did not feel particularly hurt by its suspicions. I especially ought not to complain, since it was through one of these suspicious persons that my whereabouts were discovered. He was a man by nature and habit inclined to suspect humanity of evil. One of those natural-born police detectives, who, having missed his legitimate calling, got his living in another way, but yet employed all his spare moments in gratuitously following his favorite pursuit. As soon as the news reached him that the minister of —— church had gone from the city in a mysterious manner, he immediately inferred

that there was something wrong about my absence. One of two reasons he insisted must be given. Either unpaid debts, or domestic difficulties. He undertook, with these suppositions for a basis, to investigate the matter. His first thought was, to go to the depot from which I took the cars after the funeral, and learn to what place I bought my ticket. In this way he expected to take the first step toward discovering my whereabouts.

He took the afternoon train for that depot, but on getting there, learned that on account of the terrible storm of Saturday, the depot had not been opened on that day. His next endeavor was to see the conductor of the evening train, to see what information he might get from him.

It happened that the regular conductor of the evening train had been detained at home that day by sickness in his family, and the one temporarily conducting the train, knew nothing, of course, about the Saturday evening passengers. But our "detective" was not to be thrown off his track by this accident. He went up to the terminus of the road, where the conductor for whom he was seeking lived, and having found him, he proceeded with his prying inquiries.

They elicited the facts which you, my readers, already know, that I was lying sick and helpless at ahotel near my own home in Speedwell.

They found me in the delirium of a fever, and removed me to my own dwelling, where, for weeks my life trembled in the balance. All earthly friends thought me destined to become the prey of the dreadful disease which had fastened its cruel fangs upon me. But the All-seeing eye was over me, and the hand which had meted out yet other earth duties for me to do, preserved and brought me to the light of better days. Through all the first of those weary weeks, I lay unconscious, and suffered as by proxy, what would have been otherwise, perhaps, unendurable pain. 'Tis one of God's kind providences that in the delirium of fever, the unhappy patient is like one gone on a long journey, who returns again to his body only to find it weak, wasted, and powerless, but free from pain, and ready, like the plastic clay of the potter's vessel, for the hand of the moulder to shape into beauty and strength.

Such was I for six long weeks, patiently waiting for God's time of restoration. But my people were not as willing to bide the time for my return to labor. There was a manifest uneasiness among them to see me again in the fields of duty. I felt that for their sake — to gratify this restlessness — I *must* return to labor as soon as possible. I did return. I preached in my pulpit before I walked across my room

without help. The experiment nearly cost me my life. It brought on an attack of bleeding at the lungs, from which I have never recovered. It was many weeks before I could venture upon public speaking again. But at last I recruited sufficiently, and when the spring blossoms began to lift up their tribute of worship, I joined them in it, and, with my people, offered thanksgiving that I was spared a sufficient measure of health to continue to proclaim the message of my Master to men. I could not hope to be as useful, or do as much as I had done, but I resolved to rest content, if I could work at all in the vineyard of my Lord.

CHAPTER IX.

DURING all those painful, trying weeks of sickness, while I was suffering so acutely from disease, my misery was doubled by the anxiety I felt about our rapidly growing expenses. All the items of expenditure which accompany a serious illness, had to be added to our already burdensome debts. We had felt puzzled before this trial came, to know how we were to get through the winter if we were all well and prospered, but here was a new weight of calamity for us to bear. Nell always soothed me in these troubled moments, by saying —

"'As our day is, our strength shall be.' There is never a burden put upon our shoulders too heavy for us to bear, but a hand unseen will be placed under it, to lighten, and make it bearable for us. If we see no way to meet the expenses of this sickness, we will be trusting and wait; there will be a way provided for us."

I took her advice, and was temporarily sooth
but at the same time the certainty haunted
like an unquiet spirit, that my family were
most suffering themselves, for necessaries
which they were willingly deprived for my sak

Nell had been promised some furs, and a new cloak for winter, and she could ill afford to do without them. Her shawl, which had seen ten years' service, was the only warm outer covering of which she could boast, and that, we knew, would be most unacceptable to the congregation with whom she worshipped. For two months she was detained at home beside my sick-bed. None complained (during those hours of peril, when all knew that my life depended on her constant care) that her place in the church was vacant. She could not safely leave me until the middle of February, and by this time the winter was so far spent that she hoped to slip through to the end of it, without a large extra outlay for dress.

The first day that my condition made it safe for her to leave me, was a bitter cold day. The air was clear and bright, and the sun shone beautifully. It was the kind of day to invite crowds to the house of God.

I was able now to sit up, and I watched from my window, with interest, the multitudes that passed, going worship-ward. Bright colors were prevailing that season, and the street

looked more like a field full of butterflies, than like a solemn concourse of people going up to a house of prayer.

I was meditating upon the singular appearance of the crowd, when Nell came into the room. It was full time that she had left the house, as the bell was ringing, but she sat down composedly, with an unmistakable air of rest.

I said with surprise, "Are you not going to church this morning? I thought you went up to your room to dress, a long time ago."

"I did think to go," she replied, "and began dressing, but I changed my mind afterward."

"What could have induced you to change your mind? I am sure there never was a finer day than this to go out."

"I know it," she replied. "If the day had not been so fine, I think I should have been more likely to have gone. You gentlemen do not always guess right, when you speculate about a woman's whims."

"But what has kept you?" I urged. "There must surely be a reason for your staying. It has been so long since you went to church, I thought nothing could have detained you at home to-day. And beside your own inclination impelling you, you know that our people are getting uneasy to see you again in your accustomed seat at church. Were you not in the room the

other day when Deacon Morgan was complaining to me of your absence, and telling me that I must see to it that the minister's pew was better filled in future?"

"No," Nell replied; "I was not present, and I am very glad that I wasn't, for I escaped one scolding by the means. And now, since the matter of my to-day's absence must be explained, I will tell you why I stayed. It is a very foolish reason, and I know you will disapprove it, as I do, in my inner heart; but I do not know how to do otherwise. I have grown so sensitive to the criticisms of our people on my dress, that I really had not independence of character enough to go to church on a beautiful day like this, when everybody else is dressed in their best, and wear my old shawl."

"Why, Nell," said I, "I am astonished; it is not like you to let a matter of pride keep you from the worship of God."

"It is not my own pride. If there were none but myself concerned, I would never absent myself from the congregated worshippers because of the lack of any article of dress. I believe it is wicked to do so, but I hold myself guiltless of that sin. You may think, and truly, that I have not much to boast of, when I acknowledge in the same breath, that I *am* guilty of the craven cowardice which bows abashed before

this pride in others, and allows it to stand between me and what I know to be my duty to God. But I do not know how to get rid of this folly. We began by indulging this meddling with our concerns, when we first came here. There, was where our mistake lay. For, once having given the slightest foothold, we have been woven about, little by little, mesh by mesh, until we are as helpless as a captive fly in a spider's web."

"I know," I replied, "that we were unfortunate in not knowing how to adapt ourselves to our new circumstances, when we first came here; but as we learn wisdom we must act upon it. It is folly for us to yield to other's opinions or criticism, accepting them in place of our own judgment, — but it goes farther than folly, and becomes wickedness, when we permit our fear of others' opinion to interfere with what we know to be our religious duty. I know how hard the trial will be for you, since our friends here are so free to express their criticisms, but I think it is your duty to go to church to-day, notwithstanding the mortification that you will have to endure in wearing the old shawl."

"If I could only stay at home to-day," she pleaded, "perhaps another Sunday will not be as cold, and the remainder of the winter I may be able to wear my thin shawl (which you know

is very respectable), without endangering my health."

"No, Nell," I answered firmly, "I would not delay when I knew that duty was knocking at the door of my heart. It will not be warm enough for six weeks yet, for you to put on your thin shawl with safety. You must do what you know to be right, and bear the mortification."

"But you would not have me go now to the forenoon service. I should be so late that my mortification would be double, being obliged to walk up the aisle 'the observed of all observers,' after the rest of the worshippers are all quietly seated in their pews."

"I would most certainly go at once. You will not find it as hard now, while your reason is convinced, and you see your duty clearly, as you will if you wait until afternoon. The moment when we are in the way of duty, is always the time to do it. It never comes so easy to us afterward."

Nell offered no more resistance. She was not the kind of character to resist and dally with events when they crowded upon her life. She accepted fate, and bore it like a heroine when necessity was upon her.

She arose slowly from her chair, and went out of the room. The look of resolute determination in her eye, left me no doubt that her purpose

was fixed and would be fulfilled. A moment after, I heard the front door close behind her and saw her pass down the street with the despised shawl wrapped close about her.

It seems a trifle to you who read, and I know you will criticise me for making so many words in describing it. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been a trifle. Had we been leading an independent life, not responsible to any one for our personal appearance, the question of what we should wear to church would have been of trivial moment. But with *our* circumstances, and in *our* position, it became really a trial. It was not our pleasure alone that was to be consulted, — not the pleasure of a single friend, or a select group of friends, whose taste we would have been pleased to gratify. But we were at the mercy of a whole congregation, and their estimate of our effort to please them was not always tempered with mercy.

In this case, however, the struggle was not as great as it had been sometimes. We were certain of fault-finding whichever "horn of the dilemma" we might take.

If Nell had decided to remain at home that day, there would certainly have been complaint of her neglecting her religious duty. We should have been told before night, that "a minister's wife ought to set better examples than that, be-

fore the congregation." Going with the worn shawl, we should be certain to hear complaint, and be reminded that "a minister's wife ought to appear better than that in public." So, as I said, it was fault-finding in either case, — that could not be avoided, — so the way of duty was plain.

All these things ran through my mind after I was left alone, and I meditated on the strange relation in which a minister's family find themselves placed to the world. Their own, and yet not their own; their Master's, and yet far from being wholly His. Belonging to their people, in the highest sense of the word belonging; and yet in that ruder sense, which allows no personal liberty, belonging under protest, and like the prisoner in chains.

There would be great beauty in pastoral relation could it be properly understood; and its duties rightly observed and mutually acknowledged and lived up to by both pastor and people. But in the present aspect of our American social life, there is danger of oppression in any contract where one party holds all the power. The pastor loves his people, and desires as far as possible, to work for them, and bear with their faults and infirmities. The people, on the contrary, love their pastor, but they demand of him and his that they shall be faultless almost as the an-

gels in heaven, and willing to be ruled in all things as with a rod of iron.

The demand of our parishes that their pastors, and their pastors' families shall be without sin, is a natural and praiseworthy desire. The kingdom of Christ would come much more speedily in the earth, could those who administer the things of the kingdom be wholly blameless in their lives. But it cannot be, while mortality remains as now, weak and erring, and Christ's ministers are clothed with the flesh as other men. There may come a time when the sinlessness of the angels will be attained by men, but I think when the time comes we shall mark the purified by unmistakable signs. Angels' wings and crowns of gold will symbolize and separate them from other men. Until such a time, when in God's good providence miraculous power shall continually uplift the hands of his ministering servants, the world must be patient with some shortcomings and errors in the ambassadors of Christ, and bear continually in mind that they have struggles and temptations to buffet with, as other men.

All these thoughts passed through my mind much quicker than I have been able to reproduce them for you, and yet the train of my thought was interrupted by Nell's return from church.

It seemed but a moment since she went out,

so engaged had I been in my meditations, but she surprised me by saying that the service had been an unusually long one, and she had made haste home, lest I should be impatiently waiting her return.

She had a glowing account to give of the eloquence of the sermon, and the effect of blessing which the whole service had produced upon her heart. She had no word of murmuring now for the mortification which she had experienced from the shabby shawl. Had it escaped her mind entirely, in her joy at the news of salvation? Was she no longer mindful of the wants of the body, when the wants of the soul were uppermost in her mind?

No; this trouble was not gone forever from her heart, but the memory of it was temporarily lulled; for, blessed be God, there are moments when the waters of the river of life sweep over our souls, and cleanse them from all thought of trouble and sorrow. There are some times when, under the night sky, we can forget that we are mortal, and only realize that God and the angels are looking down upon us through the starry twilight. Then, with all the good and true within us, we answer the call of the Most High, when he asks us to live for truth, righteousness, and duty.

The same effect is often felt in hours of worship, when we are drawn out of ourselves and

think only of the salvation of Christ. At such hours, our hearts are ready to break forth into praise, and our tongues ready to say that we will leave all and follow Him.

Such an hour had this been to Nell, and she brought part of the blessing home with her to my sick-room to make it too seem like the "gate of heaven."

While we were in the midst of this exalted joy, we received another evidence of the power of the annoyances of earth, to drag us from the very portals of the heavenly estate.

Little Katie, our youngest born, burst open the door of the sick-room suddenly, and rushed into her mother's arms. Her face was flushed and her eyes flashing with excited feeling.

"O, mother," she cried, indignantly, "I never was so mad before."

"Why, Katie, darling," said Nell, "I am surprised to see you here at this time. Your Sunday school is surely not over? Why have you come home? and especially, why have you come in this excited frame of mind?"

"I'll answer your last question first," replied Katie. "I came home because I was so mad I couldn't stay at church. I went out into the entry to get me a book from the library, and I found Deacon Morgan and Mr. Tripp out there. They were so much engaged talking, that they

did not see me at all. I heard Deacon Morgan say —

"'It never will answer to have our minister's family looking so shabbily when they come to church. We must do something about it.'

"'I know it,' Mr. Tripp replied; 'I have noticed the children look very shabby this winter; and really that shawl that Mrs. G. had on to-day was unbearable. She looked more like some old woman dressed for market-day than like a minister's wife in the house of God. But what can we do about it?'

"'I think we shall have to make them some presents. They have had a pretty hard time, you know, and I suppose they don't feel as if they could spend as much money for dress as they would have done if the minister had not been sick all winter.'

"'I suppose their doctor's bill will count up some this season, but they can't be fully excused on that plea,' said Mr. Tripp, 'for you know our minister had been looking very shabby, himself, for several months before he was taken sick.'

"'Yes: I know he had, — but if he had been well, I suppose he would have had a new suit of clothes before this time. As it is, in consideration of their misfortunes, I guess we had better be generous to them, and make them some

kind of a handsome present. Wouldn't that be the best way?'

"'Well, yes; I guess so. But what shall it be?'

"'I think,' replied the deacon, 'that a dozen or twenty of us had better get our heads together and make up a purse of a hundred dollars or more, and take it round to his house and give it to him. What do you think of that?'

"'I don't exactly like it. If we make up a purse, and give them the present in money, they may use it for provision or rent or perhaps pay their old debts with it. I heard somebody say the other day, that our minister had contracted debts since he came here, that they didn't believe he could ever pay in the world. Now I dont believe in any man getting in debt, but I especially object to a minister doing so.'

"'Well, if you dont believe in a minister being in debt, why do you object to our helping him out?'

"'Because we didn't make ourselves responsible for his extravagance, when we invited him here. And I, for one, wont have anything to do with getting people out of a pit, that they have deliberately jumped into. If you want to buy the family some clothing, I will give toward that, and we can buy the articles ourselves which we think they most need, and make a kind

of surprise party and carry them up there. In that way there can be no mistake about the proper appropriation of our money. Are you agreed to that?'

"'Yes,' said Deacon Morgan, 'I will agree to anything that will help the family, and make their outward appearance more respectable. For I feel that it is a disgrace to us as a congregation, to have them looking as they have done the past few months. I have felt ashamed every time I have seen those children come into church for a long time.'

"O, mother," said poor little Katie, "I was so mad by this time, I couldn't stay another minute. They are the meanest men that ever lived, to scold about us, when pa has been sick all winter, and we have had such hard times to live. I guess I don't want to wear old clothes, any more than they want to have me," and here the poor child burst into an indignant flood of tears.

Nell caressed her; yet with a mild, reproving glance, she said —

"My little girl must be more patient with the rough places of life. I know it was hard for you to hear Mr. Tripp and Deacon Morgan say such severe things, but I am sorry, my child, that you could get so excited as to say that they were 'the meanest men that ever lived.' You were

as bad as they were to us, when you called them hard names. You know it says in the Bible, that 'we must forgive our enemies.'"

"I know it," sobbed Katie, "but it aint easy when folks will be so cruel."

I must confess that for the moment my sympathies went with Katie. It did seem heartless and cruel enough for any one to criticise our outward appearance, in a season when our inward miseries had been so hard to bear, and when we might have expected only sympathy at the hands of our friends. I could see that Nell was struggling to keep back the tears, even while she reproved Katie for her impatience.

How hard it was for me to bear it. I could endure bitter hardships for myself; I could bear crosses and contumelies, if need be, when only my own comfort was concerned, for I belonged to my Master, and knew that I must needs follow him in suffering as well as in duty and joy, —but I looked at my dear ones, —who were mine to care for and protect, and I confess that it was hard, very hard to have them insulted and abused, while they were practising self-denial for my sake, and not have the privilege of resenting it.

Many men who could be thoroughly Christian, and entirely master their passions under any personal grievance, are lost in rage when their fam-

ilies are injured. God has made men strong that they may care for and protect the weak. He has put the impulse of affection into their hearts and made it undying, that they may never forget this sacred obligation and trust. He has given us the impulse which rises up to say, when our little ones are injured, "This shall not be." And even to the extent of rage and violence this impulse would carry us, if it were not tempered by Christian patience. But God has not left man's passions to sway him like an unbridled steed. There is a Master whose voice reaches him. It says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." Man listens and is taught, and the good angels come and minister unto him.

I was silent while my little child was telling her injuries. And though the bitter words which my heart prompted, burned on my lips, I did not give them utterance, feeling that I could leave it all with Him who careth for the sparrow, and to whom my little ones are dearer than ever to my own loving heart.

I ought not to boast of this self-control, for I am sure that I gathered a large share of it from my gentle wife. Had she been violent and resentful, I should have caught the spirit, and in my weak condition of body I could not have controlled myself. I am sure that little incident would have been the wedge which would have

severed pastor and people, and left the Speedwell Society without a minister, and me without a charge. We talk of diseases being contagious, and we flee away from one infected, as if our lives depended on our isolation, but there is no contagion so dangerous or easy of infection as passion. The mind receives impression more easily than the body, and effects upon it are much more to be dreaded. It is the rarest thing in the world to see a person get really angry, and speak passionate words, that it does not excite the same emotion, and call out like expression of excited feeling in the person or persons with whom they are dealing.

I have noticed this a thousand times in parents governing children. The child, perhaps, is very provoking in the perpetration of some of his little mischievous tricks. He does not mean harm, and is innocent of any intention to excite rage by the deed. But the parent sees great inconvenience and trouble coming out of it. He, or she grows excited and speaks words to the child, over which, in calmer moments, they may weep bitter tears. The child catches the spirit instantly, and expresses a rage which more than equals what burned in the heart of the parent. And what began a trifling inadvertence on the part of the child, without any tendency to lasting sorrow, ends in a deep, dark stain on its

soul, which years may not obliterate; whose burning brightness may defy the tears of angels before it is bleached out.

Beware, O ye guardians of childhood, and watch well your tendencies to wrong-doing; weigh well the words of your lips, and guard the frowns which an angry impulse would bring to your brow. Remember that you, before your children, are standing as before an uncovered mirror. You will see all the beauty and all the deformity of your life reproduced, before the death-angel hides that mirror from your eyes.

But this story is not all told in the relation of parent to child. Evil begets evil, through all the relations of life. There is no wrong-doing that has not its accompanying provocation. Do not, in any case, blame too harshly the one whose sin becomes most publicly exposed. They may be many times more sinned against, than sinning. The watchful eye of the Father may look down lovingly and in pity on many a poor outcast for whom the world has nothing but bitter scorning. But let me not wander too far from the thread of my narrative lest my dropped stitch be difficult to find again.

Nell's wisdom and patience, on that trying day of which I write, were sufficient for herself, her child, and me; and we all came off conquerors in that conflict of feeling. Of course it was

harder for Nell, than for me, as her Christian feeling was to be put to the test publicly, while my feeble condition of body gave me an opportunity to struggle with my temptation alone in my closet.

If Nell had not proposed to go to church in the afternoon I should not have urged it; for it did seem too hard a trial for the pride which is in every heart, to be compelled into the presence of the congregation again, after the morning's cruel criticism. I waited with anxiety to see what course she would pursue. When the bell rang for the afternoon service, she arose, quietly put the despised shawl about her shoulders, and the shabby bonnet upon her head, out from whose faded trimmings looked the most placid, reconciled face that I ever saw her wear.

Thanks to the noble womanhood within her, and the dear God whose chastenings had wrought out for her such perfect peace; she was mistress of circumstances, and ruled like a triumphant queen over the vicissitudes of life. Katie had not, with her child eyes, pierced the darkness, and found her way to the light. Her passion had subsided, but she had settled into a dogged determination not to appear in public again until she could appear well enough dressed to avoid criticism. She had retired to one corner of the room, and was very intently reading a book when

the bells commenced ringing. She did not look up, or seem in any way conscious of the sound. Nell roused her by saying—

"Come, Katie, it is time to start for church."

"I don't want to go to church this afternoon," said Katie, resolutely. And she looked up from her book with the flush of anger still in her eye.

"I know you don't want to go, Katie," Nell replied, mildly, "but we have to do a great many things in this world that we don't want to do. It will be good for you to go."

"O, don't ask me to go, mother. I will do anything else to please you, but it does seem as if I couldn't do that."

"It is not alone to please me that I ask you to go, my child; but there is a principle involved, and I must urge you this time beyond your inclination. You do not see anything but mortification before you now, in yielding to my request; but you will not regret your obedience in the end, I know."

Katie rose sullenly, put on her outer garments, saying, as she did so—

"I am only going to please you, mother; and I can't see, for my part, how any good can come from attending public worship when one goes, in the frame of mind that I am in to-day. I shall only think of the injuries of the morning, I know, and not listen to one word of the sermon."

"Perhaps you will feel differently before we get to church. Fresh air is a very good medicine for us when we are angry, and if you are not cured by that, certainly the house of God is no place to foster ill-feeling."

"They wont either of them cure me, to-day," Katie replied, petulantly. "I never heard that you could heal a wound by irritating it. I shall only grow madder when I come into the presence of Deacon Morgan and Mr. Tripp, again."

"We will try it, my child, and see if you will not be able to think that you are going into the presence of God, who has power to soothe the tempest of man's passion, instead of being overconscious of the presence of those who will excite you to unchristian anger."

As these words were being spoken, the heroine martyrs vanished from my sight, and I was left alone again, with my reflections. They were by no means of the most soothing nature, but I think they led me, — although over a rugged pathway, — yet, at last, to the table-lands of peace.

CHAPTER X.

THE next day, Monday, brought with it all the cares and trials incident to its position as the opening day of the active week. I was now just able to walk about the house, and I had interested myself to such a degree in Nell's varied duties, that I had really forgotten the provocations of the previous day. When our little family group gathered in the study at night, we were as peaceful and happy as if no disturbing influences from without had ever ruffled the even currents of our lives.

But fate had not allotted to us, as the close of that day, a quiet evening of home joy.

The door-bell rang, and was answered by Nora, our eldest daughter, who, being gone but a moment, returned to the study with surprise written all over her face, saying —

"The house is full of people. They have brought baskets and bundles of various sorts,

and without saying as much as 'with your leave,' they have walked in, and taken possession of the house."

This would have been an astonishing, and perhaps a pleasing, piece of news, if we had not been already partially prepared for it in the disagreeable way which I have before narrated. I must confess that my first impulse was to lock the study door on the inside, and thus protect my household treasures from the annoyances which were sure to overtake them in the coming incidents of the evening.

Will you think me unreasonable, dear reader, because that impulse sprang up in my heart? It was not that my parishioners were unwelcome in my house; not that their gifts, had they been free-will offerings, would have given me pain or trouble; but, coming as they did, a tacit reproach for what it had been impossible for us to avoid, I must confess that my heart rebelled a little in the acceptance. 'Twas but for a moment. I remembered, as soon as my better angel had time to whisper in my ear, that I was not my own to serve my own pleasure, but my Master's, to do his work and bear his burdens. These people who waited our coming in the parlors were sheep of his flock, and I must feed them, and gather them to his fold, whatever the attempt might cost me of personal trouble or discomfort.

Do not think that our guests were waiting, as long as it has taken me to describe that passing impulse. It was but a flitting thought, which came and was gone while Nell was rising from her chair, and saying —

"We must greet our friends with a Christian spirit, and accept whatever they have brought with the thankfulness which our need prompts. It would be easier to go out and say, 'Leave me alone with my troubles; I will have none of your gifts which come as a reproach of our poverty;' but I know this spirit is wrong, and I will not indulge it."

Another moment, and we were thrust out from the seclusion and quiet of our family circle, where we were enjoying such peace as comes to us only from intercourse with those whom we truly love, and were in the midst of a gay, jostling promiscuous crowd, who hustled and pushed one another to catch a first glimpse of us, that they might see what the effect of the surprise might be. We passed hastily from one to another, speaking words of welcome, striving to make our parishioners feel that if we were poor, as the world counts poverty, we were rich in spirit, and in all the graces and abundance of a kindly heart. Nell joined in these generous expressions of hospitable greeting, and our friends appeared at home and happy with us, to a much greater

degree than they could have done, had they known that we were in posession of the secret of their coming.

It is a great thing gained, when we are able to take the world for what it *ought* to be, instead of for what it is. This faculty not only makes life comfortable for ourselves, but it also improves humanity wonderfully with which we have to deal. A child will feel a pride in good behavior, if you can impress the fact upon him that you are expecting extraordinarily good behavior from him, and that you do not think of anything else as possible.

We are all children of a larger growth, and happy is he who can meet his fellow-man as if he had nothing but right, generous behavior to expect at his hands.

Our friends had brought with them ample provision for a bountiful supper, and while we were exchanging greetings, nimble fingers were at work in our dining-room, spreading the table and arranging their bounties in the most tempting manner. This part of the entertainment had been prepared with the greatest care, and every dainty which could please the eye, or tempt the palate, was spread out for our admiration and pleasure.

We might have enjoyed the supper. (I use the word might here, in the sense of ought.) It

did seem as if, in a night filled with so many other kinds of torment, we ought, at least, to have had the poor privilege of feeding our bodies in peace.

But this privilege was denied us. The severe and unkind criticism which our guests passed, on the meagreness of our kitchen furnishings; in spite of all our attempts to overlook them, sunk deep into our hearts.

As I was passing the dining-room door, I heard Miss Oglesby's shrill voice saying —

"Well, I declare, we shall not be able to lay this table in any kind of decent order. There are not enough dishes in this house to provide a common meal for a family, and how are we ever to make out anything like a table of this kind?"

"Why, I am sure there must be more somewhere," replied Mrs. Stebbins. "Nobody could think of keeping house with this pitiful handful of crockery; and especially a *minister's* household couldn't expect to get along so shabbily."

"There must be another china cupboard somewhere about the house," chimed in Mrs. Brown. "I will go and ask Mrs. G. myself about it."

"You can save yourself that trouble," Miss Oglesby replied; "for I was here and helped them when they moved into this house, and I know that there is no other cupboard except these opening from the dining-room."

"Well, what shall we do?" sighed Mrs. Stebbins, with that peculiarly lackadaisical air, which, to have witnessed, would have convinced the most incredulous that the crockery question was really vital to the well-being of the world.

Her attitude and manner were as indicative of distress, as if she had witnessed the dissolution of the component parts of the universe.

Oh, pity for the weakness of poor human nature, which magnifies every drop of vexation into an ocean of trouble, and, as Holmes so comically expresses it —

> "Thinks the bottom out of the universe,
> When his own little gillipot leaks."

I turned away with a mingled feeling of pity and vexation in my heart, for the weakness which could chafe a human soul to the degree of fretfulness, over so slight an annoyance.

I returned to the parlor, and was about forgetting all the petty vexations of life, in an animated conversation with one of my friends concerning a new book which he had just been reading, when I heard Mrs. Brown say to Nell, who was standing near me —

"We are all ready for supper, Mrs. G., as soon as we can find some more spoons. I suppose you have your silver under lock and key,

but of course you will not object to bringing it from its hiding-place on such an occasion as this."

These words were spoken in a half whisper, and yet loud enough to be heard by all the persons in her immediate vicinity. Nell blushed crimson, yet she preserved a good degree of composure while she replied that all the spoons in her possession were in the dining-room closet.

"You must certainly be mistaken," Mrs. Brown replied; "there are but half a dozen *silver* teaspoons in that closet, the remainder of the spoons are such as I am sure you would not use on your table."

Nell's heroic look came with her reply —

"All that I have are in the closet that I mentioned."

Mrs. Brown turned away with an air of astonishment and "injured innocence," and I overheard her remark to Mrs. Stebbins, who was waiting for her at the door —

"We will bring our table furniture with us next time we undertake to get a supper at the minister's house, for I declare there is nothing here. Mrs. G. says she has no other spoons except those in the dining-room closet. I don't see how we are to make out with those."

"Oh, never mind," said Mrs. Stebbins, good-naturedly. "You remember the proverb, 'When

you are at Rome, you must do as the Romans do.' That will apply well to the present case. We are at the minister's and we must do as the minister does — eat with a pewter spoon and be satisfied."

As the ladies (?) were receding from me during this conversation, I heard no more, except the scornful laugh which followed the last remark. During the time that it had occupied, I had been seemingly listening to the gentleman at my side; but though I stood, bowing and smiling assent to the wisdom of the sage philosophy that he was explaining, not one word of it had reached my inner consciousness. What double-dealers we are in the relations of life! We bow and smile, and seemingly, attend the panoramas which are flitting past us in our daily life, but in half the instances we are scarcely enough conscious of their presence to repeat afterward a single distinct thought concerning them.

Men call these moods absent-mindedness, and oftentimes count them as credit to an individual, thinking that his mind is preoccupied with some deep, wise thought, which prevents him from taking cognizance of the trifles passing about him. But I believe that I am right in my use of the term "double-dealing." We have not one great thought in the mind, occupying and cultur-

ing us, when we *seemingly* attend to another. It is the struggle between *two little* thoughts that confuses us, and makes us appear absent-minded and absurd. An absorbing, all-engrossing thought has a oneness about it which gives clear, brilliant, and beautiful light to all the minds about us, and there are no cross rays to intercept, or confuse, or disturb. I knew this, and think my manner must have indicated a consciousness of petty guilt; for I remember a confused sense of satisfaction when I was relieved from the necessity of replying to a direct question, which must have exposed my inattention, by the call to supper.

Taking Nell on my arm, we went out to the dining-room, and took our places as we were directed, at the head of the table. Our children were brought and arranged like the right and left wings of an army, on either side of us. This was the time chosen as the moment of interest, when the gifts were to be distributed. The company all crowded into the room, and ranged themselves in stiff, formal rows; observing all the decorum possible, at the same time every one looking out for an opportunity to see the face of every member of the family who were about to be victimized.

Our position was so conspicuous, that not a shade of feeling, whether of surprise, indigna-

tion, or pleasure, could flit across the face of any member of our family without attracting the notice of, and calling forth remarks from, the spectators. We were like animals caged for the inspection and gratification of a curious, gaping crowd.

I am sorry to be obliged to relate that little Katie's face wore anything but a conciliatory expression to begin with. Her spirit had been thoroughly roused by what she considered the indignities of the previous day, and she was determined on holding herself in an unreconciled frame of mind. Her pouting, defiant lips moved impatiently, as her fiery spirit within chafed for utterance. I truly forgot my own annoyance in my anxiety for her. I feared the worst from her impulsive speech, if she should be irritated farther in the progress of events, as I foresaw she was sure to be. What would I not have given, could I for the moment have had bit and bridle upon her, that I might have curbed her as I would do a mettlesome steed, when it was persistent in its own unguided way. Of course I could not speak to her, without attracting the attention of the whole company; and, as she was too far from me to be reached by a friendly admonition of fingers or toes, I could do nothing but await the *dénouement*.

Deacon Tripp came forward with his most dis-

agreeable air of pomposity, holding in his open arms an entire new suit of clothing designed for me, which he delivered to me with these words: —

"Respected Pastor: In behalf of the members of your congregation, I present you with this *valuable* gift, which we have hoped would be of service to you now that you are about to re-enter the field of active duty. We feel that you have merited some favor at our hands by your faithful work for us. But now, especially, when you are prostrated by the misfortune of sickness, we desire to show our good-will and Christian charity toward you. Realizing as we do, that your long-continued helplessness and consequent increase of expenses must have reduced your otherwise abundant salary, we have been led to think that this extension of our generosity might be acceptable to you, and perhaps be a new link, binding us together, and impelling you to labor in our behalf. As such a token of our good-will and thoughtfulness, will you accept this present at our hands?"

At this point in his oratorical display, he bundled the whole suit of clothing from his strong arms, into my weak ones, and retiring a step or two from me, he folded his hands and awaited my reply.

What could I say? That I was astonished

and surprised by their unexpected generosity which had thus, with such marvellous bounty, dropped its rich stores into my lap of need ?

No ! I checked this speech on my tongue, because I could not quite make up my mind to say I was taken by surprise, when the truth was I had been forewarned of the coming gift ; and again, I could not confess my poverty, and the acceptableness of the gift on account of it, because I remembered that Mrs. Stebbins had reproved Nell one day for speaking of the necessity of close economy, and said to her —

" We don't like to have our minister's family *speak* of being poor. It is very humiliating to a parish with our wealth and position to have the matter get abroad, that we employ a minister who is little better than a pauper in his worldly circumstances."

Since this remark, we had suffered in silence, and it would never do for me to commit the unpardonable sin of repeating the offence now, in the presence of all these magnates.

What then should I say ? That the gift was acceptable to me as a testimonial of the good-will of my people ? I knew very well that it had not been a free-will offering, fresh from loving hearts ; but, on the contrary, that it was a gift compelled by my shabby appearance, and the feeling of pride which prompted them to improve

the image on which they were compelled to look during the hours of the Sunday service.

Knowing this, I could not thank them for good-will to me, which was given only as a selfish way of gratifying their own pride. I was puzzled, and I thought it would be the most honest way out of the difficulty, to utter as few words as possible, so I simply said—

"I thank you, my friends, most sincerely for your kindness, and will try in the future to prove myself worthy of it."

As soon as I was done speaking, I laid the clothing down on a chair which stood near me, and waited further developments. Looking on the faces about me, I noted an undisguised astonishment expressed on them. Evidently they were surprised at my brevity. They had hungered for compliments on their generosity; they had flattered themselves that I should be overwhelmed with a sense of obligation; and when, in place of it, I offered so simple a word of thanksgiving, they were quite unable to understand it. They had come, like a party, who would storm a city, thinking to penetrate into the inner citadel of my heart, and bring out its most sacred treasures of gratitude and love. But having commenced their siege, and presented what seemed to them an overwhelming demand for submission, they had received no response, save a simple form of

words, which, by reason of the moderateness of their expression, were to them almost as no return for their gift. When will humanity learn that love and gratitude are not like the commodities of the market, which can be ordered by the bushel, and paid for at the door of your dwelling, and thus become wholly your own. We *buy* potatoes with our money, and they are ours; but love we must *win* by long-continued and faithful acts of kindness. Gratitude we must *get*, by besieging the heart of our friend; not rudely, and as one who claims recompense as his right, but rather by gentle and tender approaches, as the dew and the evening zephyr woo and win the fragrance from the heart of a flower.

I could have accepted this gift from my parishioners, with a grateful heart. I could have been manifestly expressive of my gratitude, if the process had been different through which the approaches to my affections had come. As it was, I met a rude approach as one meets an oncoming foe, and the shock was not pleasant to either party.

After an awkward silence, into which no voice was magnanimous to thrust itself, Miss Oglesby came forward, and stood before us. She bore about her the air of one who is martyred for righteousness' sake. The programme of the evening had evidently been broken in upon, and

the remainder of the play was carried on in that undertone which indicated depression on the part of the actors.

Miss Oglesby, as she approached us, looked more like a perambulating milliner's store, than anything else to which I could compare her. She was nearly smothered in the dry goods and bonnets which she brought.

On each hand she carried bonnets of bright velvet, which, with their dashing costliness, seemed truly like strangers in our household. Back of the bonnets, on her right arm, was a large shawl having a white centre and a crimson border, which, being spread out in such a manner as to exhibit its beauties to the best advantage, made really a striking appearance. On the left arm was a dress pattern of drab silk, whose rich though sombre hue, was a fine relief to the dazzling brightness of the other gifts. She brushed by me with an impatience which indicated the displeasure she felt in my part of the drama, and, going straight up to Nell, presented her with one of the bonnets, the shawl, and the dress, accompanying each presentation with a separate speech, which had evidently been written and learned at some previous time, when mayhap, in her private closet she was anticipating the glory of the present moment.

After each speech there followed one of those

distressing pauses made by the interludes which were allotted for expressions of thanksgiving. But through them all Nell passed bravely, only bowing and smiling her thanks, while her eyes were overflowing with tears, which said, better than the most eloquent words, that the gifts were acceptable to her, though they were rudely given.

The pebble of kindness ought to fall so lightly in the heart's deep well that though it makes a ripple on the waters, they should not overflow their barriers.

I once saw a goblet full of water filled again with pins, while not one drop of the water was displaced. The pins were inserted so gently one by one, that during the whole process, not one drop of the water rebelled against their companionship. That, I said to myself, is like the way that God puts his mercies into the human spirit. Daily, constantly, unintermittingly, he drops those mercies down, — so gently that, though the surface of the soul's deep waters are stirred in recognition of their coming, there is no rude jostle or sudden overflow of those waters.

Such should man's gifts be to his brother. 'Tis not fitting that we should overwhelm one another with a sense of obligation, and humiliate the recipient of our favors with the necessity of expressing in words, the gratitude which should

be lived out in the thousand gentle amenities of our civilized life.

Our brother should be glad with our gift, and not ashamed. We should be godlike in the courtesy of our giving, willing that our friend should receive, without, at the moment of reception, standing face to face with the giver. Thus tremblingly and modestly conferred, the items of our beneficence shall gather together like the sands of the valley, and anon, before we are aware, a mountain of affection has gathered for us in the heart of our friend.

But. Miss Oglesby was wholly unacquainted with this theory of giving, or at least wholly disinclined to the practice of it. Her method, as we have seen, was thrusting favors; her only joy in giving, was in witnessing the humility with which her favors were received.

She noted Nell's tears, and they gratified her. She even grew eloquent over her part of the service, and put in some extempore remarks, accompanied with hysterical sobs, which she seemed to think appropriate to the occasion.

A laughable, as well as a pitiable sight, to see one attempt a pleasure which should make Mayday in many hearts, and so conduct the service, as to make it appear solemn as a funeral occasion, or a time of great and exceeding lamentation.

After a few moments' indulgence of these hypocritical tears, — for I cannot in truth call them anything else, — she turned from Nell to the children. Here, she evidently expected to meet with the crowning stroke of her success. If the father had been, as she thought, indifferent, and the mother impervious to her attacks of eloquence and generosity, save a few shining tears; the motive of which she was unable to decide, there might be yet hope in the possibility of her being able to touch the hearts of the children.

Nora was truly thankful for the gift bestowed on her, and her expression of gratitude was full and free. The bonnet with which she was presented, was indeed a very pretty one, and as her old one had long since parted with what of beauty it had first boasted, she had reason to rejoice in the possession of a new one.

We had carefully kept the secret of the previous day, and, through our influence, Katie's indignation had not extended to the other members of the household. Consequently, Nora's joy was undisturbed. We rejoiced that it was so. It needed one bright spot to relieve the darkness of that unpleasant hour.

Her expressions of pleasure were freely given, and even Miss Oglesby seemed satisfied.

Then came Katie's turn, and the moment of

trial for us all. Miss Oglesby began by saying—

"I present you, Miss Katie, with this bonnet, and I hope to find in you as grateful a spirit as your sister has expressed. It is delightful when you desire to please the heart of a friend, to find that heart open to receive your munificence."

Through the utterance of these words Katie's eyes were flashing indignantly, and when the silence came which was expected to be filled with the manifestations of her gratitude, she could contain her wrath no longer.

"Miss Oglesby," said she, "I am not obliged for your gift, and I will not be forced into saying that I am. These presents were not brought here to make us happy, and you know that they were not. If all you people had not been ashamed of us, and our shabby clothes on the street and in the church, you would never have thought of bringing these things for our comfort!"

These words were spoken with an impetuosity which defied check, and the silence which followed them, there was no inclination on the part of her auditors to break. I was shocked. I can never describe the mingled emotions that strove within my heart at that moment.

The saucy rudeness displeased me. Its effect on the mind of the child, I knew would be very

bad, and upon my relations to my parish, feared the consequences would be most disastrous. But underlying all these feelings, a sense of justice done, possessed me. The truth had been spoken once, and whatever the result might be, the way to that kind of fashionable deception could never be as easy again to the actors in this drama.

As soon as I was able to collect my thoughts, I banished the child from the room, with an open reproof for her rudeness, and apologized to my guests for the discourtesy, trusting to their generosity to overlook the impulsive speech of a child.

They accepted my apology, and this hard point over, we proceeded to discuss the supper, with what of heart we had left, after so uncomfortable a beginning.

Our guests did not incline to remain long after the repast was over. They all seemed to be impressed with the fact that a very disagreeable discovery had been made, and to realize that it would be more comfortable for all parties to digest their mortification in private.

Did we, in after consideration, sorely repent the rashness which our little Katie manifested that night? I cannot truly say that we did. It is something to have the *truth* told, even though it be a sharp weapon, and the wound it inflicts

be sometimes deep. It is not a poison blade, and the heart it touches, though it quiver at the time, will yet be healthier for the scathing process.

CHAPTER XI.

A FEW weeks after the unfortunate occurrences of the "Surprise Party," I was able to resume my place amid the world-workers. It was not an easy thing to do. My mind, through that long bodily weakness, had grown inactive and listless. I had neither the resolution nor strength to press myself into the niches of duty. My parish was like a half-worn and neglected stocking. Stitches were let down in every direction.

I sometimes grew discouraged when I heard complaints here, and murmurings there, because the minister's duties were undone. I tried to satisfy the fault-finders as speedily as possible; but I soon found that nothing was gained by outrunning my strength. For one day's overwork, I often lay by three or four, unable to do anything.

At length I learned wisdom, and I said, "The

Universe was not made in a day, — even this little world took a long time in its creation; and in the present lost and forlorn condition of the creatures God has created, he does not make undue haste for their redemption. Cannot I be calm and patient with my work, as He is with his?"

Then I bided my time more wisely, and when my people murmured at my delays, I taught them, too, a lesson of patience, that we might all be benefited by what at first seemed only a cross and a misfortune. The first Sunday that I went to church, was, for me, a humiliating day.

Of all the mortifications in the way of dress that I have ever felt, the wearing of that suit of clothing was the worst. I have before now had necessity for wearing clothes threadbare and gray with age, but they were my own, honestly, ungrudgingly mine, and I could wear them *even proudly*, for I believe that half the pride we mortals feel, is over our humility. A strange statement, but, I believe, a true one.

You never heard of any one, I think, who was proud of *being* proud. On the contrary, people resent with indignation having it said that they are haughty. But with what avidity they will grasp at the compliment when they are called meek and humble.

I was humiliated when I wore a threadbare

coat, but I enjoyed the humiliation, when I reflected that it was in my Master's behalf that I was chastened.

Now I was dressed in the best that the market afforded, but it had been bought with other men's money, and I knew they looked upon it in that light. I was their agent, deputed to appear in fine apparel, as an advertising sheet for their generosity.

But why do I linger over, and descant upon so trifling an annoyance, when troubles so much larger were waiting in the immediate future for me.

There were many and varied trials connected with our stay at Speedwell, but they all culminated in one great sorrow, which, like a mountain wave, washed over the shore of our life, and blotted out the trace of all the tears which we had shed before.

The Spring-time was at hand. All the hope which comes of that opening morning of the year, had crept into our hearts. It was a time for forgetting life's suffering, and thinking only of its joy, and we all resolved that for a little time we would lay aside our heartaches and anxieties, and give ourselves up to festivity and joy.

John and Katie, who had for so long time kept their hope bright in absence, had resolved to

unite their hitherto lonely paths. John's position and salary had been again advanced and increased, sufficiently to make the support of a wife possible to him, and the time of Katie's long and patient labor and waiting seemed to be nearly at an end. As she had no father and mother to share the festivities of a bridal occasion, and no home to make glad with bridal cheer, we persuaded her to come to Speedwell and be married at our house. Katie had many pleasant associations to leave in the place of her birth, — a place where she had spent the whole of her life; where all her sorrows had been sympathized with, and her burdens lightened by the judicious counsel of friends. The parting from those friends was a time for tears, and yet how all this darkness was rainbow-hued with the great hope which was lying close nestled in her heart. 'Tis thus that the balance of our lives is perfected. A great joy and a great sorrow are laid over against one another, and out from the trembling oscillation, springs the glory of a spirit, beatified and redeemed.

Katie came to us a month before the time appointed for the wedding, in order that she might have opportunity to make her purchases in the city, and have her clothing made in the approved styles. The wedding outfit was not to be an extravagant one, but we were all anxious that it

should be fit and appropriate. Katie was modest in her tastes, and did not desire extraordinary preparation for her bridal; but it was delightful to me to see with what a pretty, wholehearted *abandon* she gave herself up to the new sensation of buying adornments and decorations for her person. She had never in her life indulged before in that kind of pleasure, and though now, of necessity, the indulgence was circumscribed and limited by her small means, yet it was more than she had ever felt, and she rejoiced by reason of the newness of the sensation.

Nell, too, gave herself up for the time to the excitement and novelty of the preparation. To make others happy was always her delight; it became particularly so in this case when the parties concerned were so near to her, and their happiness was so wrapped up in her own.

Her counsel and assistance were of great value to Katie, as she had, during the year that was past, become quite a woman of the world, in the way of learning the tricks of trade. She flitted about the streets with her, as if they had been girls together. She renewed her youth, and permitted the joy to overflow from her heart, as if the callous of years had put no barriers about its brim.

Silks and cashmeres, ribbons and laces, took

unwarranted liberties in all the family rooms in the house. Of course, the parlors belonging to the parish, we were not allowed to spread the signals of our joy over them; but every other place in the house was turned *pro tempore* into a place of confusion.

The children were in their element, looking at the wonders, and asking so many questions that, if the occasion had been other than a bridal, the tongue that answered them all must have grown weary and impatient. But who ever saw a bride elect lose the equanimity of her spirit amidst the excitements of her preparations. The sunlight of that great, foreshadowing joy, sifts into all the cloudy crevices of the spirit, and there is light in every chamber of the soul.

I, too, caught the spirit of happiness which pervaded the household, and all through that month my soul sang its May-day songs, and throbbed with joy over this blossom-time of life. My sermons were touched with the electric pulses which thrilled about me, and my people, who recognized quickly any marked freshness of thought, attributed it to my late sickness. I was often complimented on the vigor and strength of my thought. Perhaps a part of their suspicions were true. The breath of joy which blew over my spirit might, and probably did, waken into life, buds of thought, which without that

stimulus, never would have developed. But I am compelled to think that the winter time of affliction which preceded it, was the main source of my mental prosperity. I had been chastened by affliction, and my soul had been subdued. I had felt the rod, and been humbled by its correction; and again I had stood near to the valley of shadows, and almost looked on the glory of the beautiful land beyond. Perhaps some of the light of it had stolen into my soul, and given me power to speak of the glory of God as I could never have done without that experience. I am only making suppositions of reasons for the peculiarity of my mental mood during that season.

My reasons may or may not have foundation in truth. When we study mental phenomena more narrowly, we shall ascertain, perhaps, the ground for these varying moods of the mind. We shall know why it is, that some days our thoughts seem leaden-winged, and our mental caliber scarce above that of the brutes; while at other times we are lifted almost into kinship with the angels, and our thoughts soar away into untried and unexplored regions of light.

Are we God-lifted at such times, or does He give his angels charge concerning us?

Perhaps, dear reader, you do not care to have me delay my narration for questions of this kind, while preparations for a wedding are

going forward; so I will waive them, and go back again to the interesting subject of the bridal. It was agreed by all, that, in consideration of our means, we had better not make a large wedding-party.

We were easily reconciled to this necessity, for we knew that to begin invitations in our parish was to open a gate which it would be impossible to shut without giving offence.

There were a few, of the less critical sort, whose genuine true-heartedness had won our affections, whom we would have gladly entertained; but it was impossible to invite one without inviting all. Such is a minister's house, and such his relation to his friends. He cannot, with safety to his prosperity, indulge freedom in his possession of the one, or in the indulgence of his feeling towards the other.

We decided, in the circumstances, that our only safety lay in inviting but few friends, and those from a distance.

There were some dear faces in the old parish that we longed to see, and Katie desired them to be present; so we trusted her with the invitations, and anticipated only joy in the result. We knew that the guests who were to come would be wholly in sympathy with us, and not fearing criticism, or expecting ridicule, we looked only for pleasure in welcoming them.

With these pleasant anticipations before us, we drew near to the time for the bridal. Katie was methodical in all her arrangements, and she had so ordered her preparations that no part of the work was allowed to tread upon the heels of another part. Everything was done in its season, and when we drew near to the day of the wedding there was none of the confusion or hurry which often attend such occasions, to make the parties miserable and uncomfortable with one another at the very outset of life. On account of this very negligence I have heard harsh words spoken before marriage which were never forgotten in the after years. Frosts may come in the winter of life, but they are sad in the spring-time, when all the rich vegetation of the summer has got to be crippled by their untimely nipping. 'Tis so with the spring-time of life. Early unkindness nips the buds of affection, which the heart is putting forth, and all through the after summer of blossoming, there will be less of beauty and harmony because of it.

Katie was philosopher enough to have thought this problem out, and she governed herself accordingly. Her dressmaker and milliner were not allowed to say, over the wedding-dress, "If I finish this in time for the ceremony, it will be sufficient," or, "This travelling-dress you will not need until next week, and I will certainly

have it ready by that time," or, "I will send the bridal bonnet round on the day of the bridal." To all these remarks Katie had one answer: "These things must all be finished and in my possession by Saturday night of this week. If you cannot furnish them for me by that time, I will take them to some one who can."

By reason of this promptness and decision, all the bridal wardrobe was ready, and at our house for inspection, on Saturday preceding the eventful week of which I am about to write. Never before, I think, was a bridal outfit more admired. It was not elaborate or expensive, but everything about it was in good taste and unexceptionable, and we were prepared to give it a large share of admiration. Not that silks or laces changed their quality or hue because they had been adopted into our family. Their added value lay not in inherent merit in them; it had grown by reason of their adoption. It is wonderful how much we admire things that are our own. *Our* baby, *our* house, *our* horse, or even our dog and cat; what extraordinary qualities do we find in them all.

So we admired all these trivials in the line of dress, and thought that never before was there a bridal outfit so appropriate and perfect in every part.

The ceremony was to take place Tuesday

evening. Many of the friends came up on Monday, and our house and hearts were filled to overflowing with the joy of greeting.

As John must necessarily be away from his business some days on the bridal journey, he had decided not to leave Boston until the evening train Monday, by which he would arrive at Speedwell at midnight. It had been several months since we had seen him, and our anticipations of his coming had filled all our hearts with joy.

All our conversation for the evening was tinged with that one bright-hued hope.

I never saw Nell in a happier mood. She discussed with animation the question "whether there was more joy or sorrow in rearing a family of children."

One of the guests, who had felt bitter heartaches on account of a reckless, disobedient son, maintained that there was much more sadness in one's experience, while rearing a family, than possibilities for joy. She enumerated all the cares and troubles incident to the early years of a child's life, descanted upon the watchings and anxieties, the toils and pains, the fears and hopes alternating over its cradle-bed; and, after all that, the bitter, bitter anguish of seeing it mature from its childhood innocence into an outcast, whose reckless wickedness must chill even the

love of a mother. "And do these things pay?" she asked. "Is there enough white light in all these years of shadow to recompense one for the darkness?"

There was wisdom and power in Nell's defence. She said —

"*All* of God's providences pay. He never created, that it was not with wise intent. No soul is burdened with sin that has not a hope of better things in store for it. And every mother-heart can wait and watch and pray for the redemption of its loved and lost. God has often a great and all-recompensing joy in store for those who have been bowed down even through many years of sorrow. And sometimes in an hour he will, in the conversion of her lost one, pour into that mother's heart the missing joy of years. Be patient, dear friend," she added; "there may come a time when your heart will say, as mine does to-night, earth has no joy like the love of dutiful children."

Katie was sitting near me during this conversation, and I saw that she was disturbed by the bitterness which our friend evinced in the frank avowal of her sorrows. It was not a time for heart-aches. Our spirits were all clothed in their habiliments of joy, — why should we allow a badge of mourning to be added to them?

'Tis the misfortune of a world like this, that

there is no unclouded joy. Nell and I, who had long ago learned this lesson of life, were prepared for this shadow. It was no surprise to us to be called on to take up others' burdens and help bear them, whether our own were light or heavy. But with Katie it was different. She was young, and had not yet learned all the self-sacrificing lessons of life. She had a right to decline others' burdens that night, and I was glad when she stole softly from the room. No one observed that she was gone but myself; so no link was broken in the sympathies of the circle, and one heart was happier without depriving others of joy. We have all of us a right to happiness when we get it on those terms.

An hour later in the evening, I went up to the children's bedroom to answer one of those nocturnal cries with which houses, where children dwell, are famously haunted.

Passing the room which had been reserved for the bridal chamber, I saw Katie sitting at the window, leaning her face against the glass, looking out into the night. Hearing my footstep, she looked toward me, and there, upturned in the moonlight, was a face so full of joy it might have been an angel's guerdon of peace. I never saw so much happiness in a human countenance before.

On the bridal bed, like a cloud of fairy dreams,

lay the wedding garments of sheer muslin, — the bridal veil, and all the light paraphernalia of a bride's costume. These formed the background of that lovely picture. The fair young girl, with her dream of love irradiating a face pure almost as an angel's, and the white, soft moonlight shedding its witchery over the whole.

Shall I ever forget that vision of beauty, that consummation of earthly joy, hallowed by the approving eye of angels? Why could it not have been stereotyped, and kept for the world that they might learn by it the possibility of earthly joy? Why could I not have retained it distinctly enough to have reproduced it on canvas? If that could have been, I might have taken rank above the most noted of the world's artists.

But no! that beautiful vision vanished, and the look of patient suffering which replaced its holy joy, has been my picture for study ever since.

I could not pass her without a kindly word; so I paused to say —

"Why, Katie, what happy thought has so possessed your soul as to separate you from us all, and make you entirely satisfied with your own society?"

She replied without hesitation —

"I was thinking why God should have ever created any other heaven than this. I am sure

we can be happy enough in a world such as we have here. If we never were to be taken from it, I could be content."

"Oh, Katie!" said Nell, who had come to my side in time to hear the last remark, "take those words back before they have fully gone from your lips. It is a fearful thing to say that we have no need of heaven."

"I didn't say that we had no need of heaven; only that that need was already supplied, without our being transferred from this world. If you mean by the word heaven, as I do, perfect happiness, I am sure I have attained to it; and what can I want farther."

"Dont, dont, Katie!" urged Nell. "It makes me tremble to hear you speak so. You have a temporary joy, it is true, which rose-tints life, and makes it seem as if there was nothing more to be desired; but, my dear child, you are only at the opening door of life's morning, just in the early May-time which precedes its summer. Hoping for the sunniest day, or the balmiest season, you will have much of shadow and many storms before life is over. There will be many times when you will be thankful for the hope of heaven, — when you will look up and bless God that you 'have here no continuing city, but are seeking one to come.' At such times you will remember the rash words spoken to-night, and wish that they were unsaid."

"I will not say them with my lips if they distress you," said Katie, "but my heart will keep repeating them, however I may chide it."

At this moment I interfered by saying —

"Why should we temper life's joy with forebodings. If Katie thinks she has attained the acme of bliss, let her dream go undisturbed. Enough bitterness stirs up in the fountain of life, without disturbing its waters when they are peaceful."

So this conversation was temporarily suspended.

When we descended to the parlors, our guests were ready to retire, and Katie came, after they were gone, and sat with Nell and myself in the study, waiting for the coming of the midnight train. All of her hope and joy rested in the safe arrival of a single railway carriage; and yet, she trusted it as she ought only to have trusted in the "Rock of Ages."

We resumed the topic of interest, and the time sped swiftly on. Katie called our attention to the midnight chimes, before I had realized that the noon of night was near.

A half-hour we waited, yet we heard no train. Katie grew impatient, and said —

"The cars are late to-night, on purpose to try the strength of my patience."

Another half-hour passed, and yet no signal indicating their arrival.

I confess that I myself grew nervously anxious. There must be a reason for the delay, and my heart foreboded the worst. Katie seemed not to be oppressed with apprehension, and I would not needlessly alarm her. She complained only of impatience, not once of fear. She was walking on the very border of the gulf which was to overwhelm her, and yet, she saw only the flowers under her feet.

After another quarter of an hour's waiting, I rose, and said, carelessly, as if no weight were lying at my heart —

"I think I must go after those cars. They seem to have forgotten that we are waiting for them."

I never remember to have had so much unhappiness, ere actual sorrow had overtaken me, as weighed on my heart while I was walking to the depot that night. And yet, how like nothing it all seemed, when compared to the awful reality that was awaiting me there. As I neared the depot, I saw that there was some unusual excitement. People were running to and fro, and anxiously crowding one another. And yet, there was no shouting or noise, such as usually attends a mass of humanity. The silence was ominous. I knew before I reached them that they were standing in the presence of some great calamity. As soon as I came near enough, I

heard the moaning of some one in distress, the subdued sobs of sympathizing friends, and the dreadful "O, my God!" of a mother who had found the mangled corpse of her son.

I comprehended all at a glance. There had been a railroad accident, and all the horrible mangling and murder which belong to such scenes, were before me.

Only one thought possessed me. My own — my first-born — my beautiful boy — was he still alive?

How can I describe to you my search for him? I was half blinded with grief, I was distracted with anxiety, I was overpowered with fear.

Struggling amid all these emotions, I groped my way among the dead and dying, till I came upon the form for which I was searching, — not bruised, nor disfigured, only still and lifeless. Beautiful as when I had seen him last, with the sweet smile of hope not yet dead on his lips, he lay before me, the personification of all my joy and all my wretchedness.

Joy that he had lived, and grown to such fair manhood, and been mine to love and hope for. Wretchedness that he was mine no longer, that he was cut off in his manhood's prime, that I could hope for his earthly development no more.

Oh, my poor sad heart! Sad for its own mis-

ery, sad for the dreadful necessity of bearing these tidings to the loved ones at home.

Where, now, were Katie's dreams of heaven?

I cannot tell you how I broke the news to her. I cannot describe how the awful fact, too terrible to be at first believed, had to be forced upon her heart, that she was widowed before she had learned how the dear name *wife* could make her pulses thrill.

And Nell, too, with her great, loving, patient heart, she had to kiss the clay-cold lips, and learn how hard it is to give a first-born to the company of angels.

Three hours after I first saw Katie at the window, the personification of all that was beautiful in perfect joy, she sat there again, in the very same chair, by the very same window, the same holy moonlight bathing her brow and kissing her lips. But, oh! the desolation writ on the last picture. The fair young girl was there still, but her form was bowed and shrunken, as it seemed, under the burden of the great woe. The bridal drapery had been all removed from the bed, and in the place of it, lay all that remained of our beloved departed one.

Let me drop the curtain upon the sad picture; for who shall dare to sing the song of the heart in sorrow, or paint in words the desolation of a soul bereft?

CHAPTER XII.

WHY should I dwell at length upon the sad events of that burial week?

I was unfitted by its great sorrow for duty. I could not interest myself in the preparations for putting on the outward paraphernalia of woe. I heard the conversation on styles and modes for mourning weeds, much as I should have listened to the words of my child about dressing her doll. The great woe was in my heart. I recognized the inner blackness; and there was no room in my mind for attention to outward semblances of shadow.

I saw the great procession of men daily jostling to and fro in the avenues of trade, and I marvelled at the mockery of busy life. Why, I asked myself, did men struggle and strive to keep alive a body which is to-day here in beauty, and to-morrow food for worms.

All the world lay for me under the shadow of

my own great sorrow. I wondered that men could eat, drink, and be merry. I thought not of life, or life's joy, but only of the deep grave, and the great hopes that it had swallowed.

Days passed by, while I remained in this shadow-land of grief.

I know that the funeral came and went; that a crowd of people thronged the house; that indifferent, curious eyes looked on that beloved face; that there were words spoken which were attempts at consolation; that a funeral train moved slowly from my door, and that afterward our house was left unto us desolate. Through all these days, amid all this pomp and ceremony, I walked as one in a dream. No breath of celestial harmony reached my ears; no light from heaven greeted my eyes. It was as if a curtain had been hung between me and all the influences that sanctify and soften sorrow. I was shocked and stunned by the suddenness of my grief, and through the desolation of its first bitterness, I only knew that I possessed a poor, sad heart, crushed and bereft.

But the light came at last, clear and steady and beautiful; and I remembered that God lived, and that his hand was gentle, always blessing, even when it seemed most cruelly to afflict.

So fresh is my memory of the first moment when light dawned upon my spirit, that it seems

to me but an hour gone by, and I once more beneath the chastening, and uplifted to the joy.

I arose one morning very early, when the birds were first beginning to sing their matin songs; and, creeping softly from the house, I went out from the city, leaving its cold walls and unsympathizing hearts a long way behind me.

Something in the open country soothed me. I could hear God's voice more distinctly when I walked in his forest temples. I was not so utterly without the help of good spirits from on high, when I separated myself from the companionship of men, and went alone to meet them where the voice of humanity could not be heard.

I had neither eaten nor slept for many days and nights. Fainting and weary-hearted, I prayed for strength and sought for consolation under the open sky and in the free meadow-lands.

God met me there, and by the simplest of tokens he spoke peace to my spirit. I was walking with my head bowed and my face to the ground, — for I had no heart to lift it heavenward, — when under my feet I crushed a little spring blossom whose modest beauty had concealed it from my eye. It was the "trailing arbutus," which so often looks out upon the world from under the snow-drifts of winter.

Its fragrance arrested my attention, and I turned to look upon its frail beauty, as it lay crushed beneath the weight of my tread.

"Ah," I said, "like my own poor bleeding heart, born and nourished amid winter snows and bleak adversities, you have matured, only to be trodden upon and blighted!"

The thought had not passed my lips, before the blossom rose, and, nodding gently in the wintry wind, it turned its pretty face heavenward, seeming to say —

"Adversity, rightly received, only brings out the sweetest fragrance from my heart, and God smiles on me the more, when I struggle upward again toward him."

Ah, beautiful blossom! the lesson that thou gavest me that moment was more to me than all the teachings I had received from the lips of man. Out of the deep depths of melancholy thou liftedst me, with the breath of thy reconciled endurance, into the atmosphere of peace.

From that moment the world seemed new to me. Life had a new significance. Not that I was at once entirely happy, — not that pure joy took the place immediately of my weight of grief; only that the shadow changed to chastened light, and the deep sorrow to a reconciled peace. I took up the burden which had before been unbearable, and went back to the duties of life. I stood under the cross which had before bowed me to the ground. I looked up to the sweet heavens, and accepted their proffers of help. I

felt that the strength of the hills was entering into my soul. The breath of the morning made a part of my life, and the dew on the grass washed away the unrest from my spirit.

'Tis a beautiful thing to be reconciled again with the harmonies of the creation, when we have been for a time exiles and wanderers. God seems for the moment to draw us closer to his bosom, and teach our spirits something of the mysteries of his wonderful creative skill. He says to us then, "Behold the beauty of the lilies, and listen to the song of the lark, and believe, while thou seest and hearest these, that there is a beauty within thee greater, and a song within thee sweeter, than any blossom or bird can boast. Accept my providences patiently, and grow beneath the storms and chills of life, and thou shalt exhibit greater beauty than the lilies, and sing the song of a reconciled spirit, whose surpassing melody shall send the lark humiliated to her lowly nest."

Such was the lesson of that morning to me. The arbutus has been to me since a sacred blossom, and I never breathe its fragrance that it does not recall something of the holy peace with which it once filled and lifted a blighted, crushed spirit.

I went back to the city with new impulses, with a new reconciliation in my heart. I seemed

then, for the first time, to remember that others had need of my sympathy and help. So selfish does grief make us, that I had wrapped myself up in the cloak of my own sorrow, and forgotten through all those dreary days that other hearts were aching like my own.

I was awake now to a sense of my duty. I realized how negligent I had been toward my family, who had suffered as deeply, perhaps, as myself. I came back to them now, with a new message of consolation.

Nell had suffered terribly in those few days. Lines of sorrow were graven deep in her brow, which had never been there before. I was astonished to see how much of the work of time had been done in those few hours of pain.

It was as if that ruthless reaper of our earthly joys had made a partner of sorrow, to assist him to a more speedy accomplishment of his work.

Yet, despite that haggard appearance of suffering, there was written on her face an undisturbed look of reconciled peace. That was the old look which had been born long years before, and had matured amid the experiences of her past life. It was not to be changed or displaced by any new emotion of the heart. No affliction could blot it out, or write in its place a record of permanent unrest.

I looked upon it with an admiring eye, and felt within myself that time and sorrow had a conqueror, — a triumphant ruler, who would overpower and destroy at last their kingdom from the earth.

I knew my patient Nell would overmaster even this deep sorrow, and bring out of the darkness the triumphant light of peace. I trusted and believed in her, and the experience of the after-time proved that my trust had not been given in vain.

Katie — what shall I say of her? She who had been plunged into the valley of grief deeper than any other one of us. She who had given up the joy of her earthly life, and was henceforth to walk only in darkness through the long avenue which leads to light. How my heart pitied her when I thought *how* long that path would be! For Nell and I, who had gone more than half-way of the journey, the goal did not seem so far distant. Allowing us the full term of "threescore years and ten," we should not be very long finishing our course. The shining river was not so far away but that at times we could imagine we heard its rippling waters, and seem to catch distant glimpses of its gleaming waves. It would not be long, at the longest, before we should go to meet our beloved in the land of rest. And we were together, to soften one

another's sorrows, and share the burden of life. Together we could meet life's trials, together we could bear its sorrows, and together wait to hear "the dip of the boatman's oar."

With Katie all these things were so different. The way was long, and the journey lonely. Her life was in its early morning, and the sultry day was before her. All the heat and burden of it must be borne alone; and the weary years between her and the meeting, stretched away like a desert with its unbroken solitude.

When I began to realize my relation to others, and the magnitude of her grief, I was appalled.

I hardly dared to ask for her that morning, after my return to the house, when, for the first time I began to think that I must help to bear the burdens that were weighing down other hearts. But what was my surprise when, on being called, she came to me with a calm, placid peace beaming on her countenance, which rivalled the peace of the morning, and made all my efforts at consolation seem idle mockeries. 'Tis true the cheerful smile had died on her lips, and the sweet sound of laughter in which we had so often heard her voice, was gone forever; but no repining or murmuring took the place of it. There was no rebellious word against God's providence, no pining for the land of rest; only a patient waiting, a quiet sitting down in the

valley, watching for the light on the mountain tops.

For days this quiet in her seemed almost a miracle. I thought it could not be enduring. I looked for every morning to bring a change. I never saw her go alone to her chamber that I did not expect her to be overwhelmed under the solitary shadows of the night; but she came back to us again with the returning day, still calm, still quietly peaceful, and I learned at last that Heaven is not scanty in its benedictions, and that the great peace is poured out without measure or stint, when the heart is subdued and able to receive it.

* * * * * * *

I have written minutely the story of this great sorrow, because through its influence we were brought to the turning-point in our lives, at which you and I, dear reader, shall separate, to know each other no more. As you have been a sympathetic friend, and followed me in sorrow, being patient with me through all the dulness of my narration, it is but just that I should give you, before we part, one peep at the calm sunshine which followed this period of cloud.

We had been now a year and a half trying the experiment of our city pastorate. We had been (as you already know) involved in debt in the very beginning of our career, and the succeed-

ing months had carried us down deeper and deeper in an abyss from which we could perceive no light on our future. We had patiently waited, and hoped on, trusting that there might be a better time in the days before us. But it came not. At the expiration of our first year, we would have moved back to our dear country parish, but our burden of debt lay like an incubus upon us. It was a halter about our necks. We could not get away from it. Much as we had been weary and heart aching, we had seen no way to loosen our fetters, or rid ourselves of the burden.

But now, in the midst of our trouble, when more than ever before we longed to be free from city mockeries and conventionalities, when we pined for the healing influences of the peaceful country, the dear God heard our prayer, and opened a way for us into rest. A distant relative of Nell, a man possessing property, had lived in the vicinity of our country home. All of the years that we had lived there, he had watched our struggles, and oftentimes to kindly and sympathizing words, he had added some well-timed present, which had assisted us, on occasions when the gift was most welcome.

We had been thankful for these favors, but had never been led to expect anything more than these trivialities from him. What, then, was our surprise when we received notice of his

death, to receive with it a summons to be present at the reading of the will, as interested parties in its bequests.

Even on the reception of this notice, we did not expect much. Fifty or a hundred dollars was as much as we dared hope for. But what gigantic proportions even that little sum assumed in our eyes. We had suffered so long, and denied ourselves so much! And then, our creditors, who had waited so long and patiently for their just dues, and saw no more prospect in the future than in the past, they were getting urgent, and often now, we were humiliated by being asked for money, when we had no money to give. In this condition of things, the prospect of even a few dollars was very acceptable.

Judge of our surprise when, upon the will being opened, we found ourselves possessed of a neat little cottage which stood near to our church in the dear old home, and which, when we lived there, had been our admiration and desire. We had never dreamed that this desire had the remotest possibility of gratification; but here, in this unexpected way, it met its fulfilment, and we were happy in its possession in an hour when we most needed to be so.

This was, indeed, a great and unlooked-for blessing, and my pulses throbbed with joy when I heard it announced. A quick impulse of un-

clouded happiness passed over me, as I contemplated the possibility of our return to the place made hallowed by so many pleasant memories. And then came the shadow, almost hiding the sunlight, with the thought of the debts at Speedwell, and the impossibility of our leaving there until they were paid. But no, these debts were not to stand in the way of our peace; for our kind benefactor, anticipating some such contingency, had left us ten thousand dollars in money, which completed our facilities for independence.

We went home that night with happy hearts. Is it to be wondered at?

Never since my terrible sickness had I felt equal to the severe contest of life in which I was daily compelled to engage. Never had I prepared for a Sunday's service when I had not felt, at the conclusion of my preparation, that I had put into it enough life force to cut short, in some degree, the measure of my days. My nervous energy was in great measure exhausted. I could only hope to recruit it by allowing myself long-continued ease and abundant leisure to grow in bodily, while I neglected, for a season, my mental strength.

The opportunity for this needed recruiting was within my reach. How joyfully I stretched out my hands to embrace it!

And Nell, who had so patiently borne with all the weariness incident to her position, was I not rejoiced for her sake? I saw, when I reviewed the past months, how much extra work had fallen upon her since I had been disabled; how thin and pale she had grown, though she had borne the burdens all so patiently and uncomplainingly that no one had thought how heavy they had been. Now there was coming a time of comparative rest for her. Did not my heart throb hallelujahs when I thought of this great joy?

I knew that long ago Nell had had hopes, well grounded, of being able to excel in the department of art. During her single life she had had much leisure to indulge the culture of these gifts. When I had first known her, she lived in the charmed atmosphere which surrounds the domain of the artist; and in giving me her love, I felt that she had divorced herself from the spirit of the beautiful, which was wooing her to dwell forever in its sacred precincts. From the time when that first great sacrifice had been made, her life had been most prosaic and commonplace.

I remembered how, through the many years of our married life, she had been the faithful housekeeper, mother, and, above all, *minister's wife*, to the exclusion of all other duties and

joys. The world looked on with an indifferent eye, at the sacrifice which a noble woman was making to obey its querulous behests. It saw in her, not the patient martyr who day by day struggled against the temptation to live above its turmoil and folly, who quietly bore with its weakness, and endured its crosses; but it persistently found in her a commonplace worker, fit, in its eyes, only to be pressed into the most wearying service. At first, this had caused me great bitterness of heart. I hoped that there might be better days in store for us in the future; but through all these years of constantly increasing care and sacrifice, I had watched her patient, struggling life, and one by one my hopes had been crushed out and disappeared. Is it wonderful that a new joy awoke in my heart, when I contemplated our future with reference to Nell's out-coming life? I knew what she had been in her patient waiting during the frost-time of life; I hoped now for the geniality of the coming summer; for the blossom-time, even though it were late, and the winter that preceded it had been dreary and long. Was it too much for me to hope?

Surely, I could not blame myself for these roseate visions. I could as well have blamed the ice for thawing under an April sun, or the blossoms for blooming when the south wind blows.

And shall I whisper a secret to you, dear reader?

I, too, had once had glowing hopes. I could remember in the long ago, away back in my young manhood, when I had been ambitious to attain literary excellence, and when I really believed that such a thing was possible to me. Having once believed this, the vision had never entirely vanished. Years of toil and varied duties had smothered the aspiration, but had not entirely crushed it out. I had walked throughout my life with the wraith of a "great expectation" flitting before me, all the time thinking I should some time grasp, and make it mine.

How many a brother clergyman have I, who has travelled over the same pathway; who began life with a quick, active mind, a head full of thought, and a heart full of feeling; who, twenty years ago, believed he should be able to leave some trace of his existence on the age in which he lived; but who, after a lifetime of labor, and such severe brain-work as few of other classes know, sees not a stray waif along his track, "To tell he lived and died"?

Some of the sacrifices which ministers and their families make are appreciated; but I am convinced that this one, the greatest of all, is little thought of.

So little has this idea engaged the attention

of the world, that I believe my last sentence will be looked upon with wonder. But I am sure the more you think of it, the truer my words will seem. Run over in your mind the number of young men you have known, who gave great promise in their youth; of whom the world said, when it noted their brilliant mental parts, "That young man will make his mark in the world." Follow him. He rouses admiration, and calls forth the applause of the masses, through all the first months of his public career. But a few years farther on, where do you find him?

He has chosen the ministry as his profession. He has desired to be a *faithful* follower of Christ, and in order to this, he has shut himself out from the many avenues which open temptingly for him in other directions. He has been now ten, or perhaps twenty years in the practice of his profession, and his whole strength of body and mind is given to its work.

How do you find him standing as a mental force to the community in which his lot is cast? I am forced to confess for you, that you find him occupying a very moderate place. He is working hard, doing an immense amount of mental labor, but only in quantity does it astonish you. The overwork of the brain has sapped it of its nicety, and whereas the lawyer, the doctor, the

farmer, or tradesman, who graduated in the same college class with much less promise, is making his mark in the world, the clergyman is working on without prominence of any sort, without the applause of men, feeling that it might have been otherwise; but,—if he be true-hearted, content in his humiliation,—satisfied with the thought that he has laid his gifts upon an altar where they are not unappreciated, and before a Master whose kindly recognition is more and better than all the applause of men.

But let me return from this digression, to tell you how we made the two lines of duty and of pleasure meet, and not deserting the one, introduced the other without a painful collision.

When our dear little society at Lyme found that we had come into possession of such a happy inheritance, they renewed their entreaties that we would return and take up the Master's work again in their midst. Our house was waiting for us,—a quiet anchorage amid the drifting tides of life. How much we had longed for a *home* of our own, and now it was ours. Could we resist such a temptation? I have only to tell you that we *did* not resist it.

I announced to my congregation on the following Sunday that we were about to depart from them, as my letters of resignation had already gone to the Committee.

Great surprise was expressed, and the usual manifestations of sorrow made, — some of them real, some feigned; but amid the conflicting emotions and expressions, there was enough of the genuine to touch my heart, and make it a very sad day to me.

No minister can have been a year and a half with a people, sharing their joys and sympathizing with their sorrows, without having wrought many tender links between his heart and theirs. He can never know *how* many or *how* tender, until the time for severing them comes.

But I will not dwell upon this painful part of my story. When it was found that we had positively decided to go, and that one of our reasons for removal was because we could not live upon our salary, great surprise was expressed.

Our committee asked us, with a reproving tone, if we "could not live on a thousand a year?"

At another time we might have been irritated both by the manner and the matter of that question, but we were too happy in the prospect of our future to allow trifles to disturb us; so we patiently replied that our past experience had taught us that there were circumstances under which we *could not* live on a thousand a year; and that we were very willing, if the fault was

ours, to leave the place to any one who thought they could improve upon our experiment. We were even benevolent enough to defend ourselves from the charge of extravagance by going over the list of our past year's expenses, and showing, item by item, where that wonderful thousand had vanished. I think our committee learned in that interview some truths of which they had never before dreamed.

They were at least sufficiently moved to offer us an increase of two hundred dollars to our salary, and to press urgently the reconsideration of our decision to leave them. But we had made up our minds, and the impulse of a great hope was leading us away.

We were not checked in our progress by learning that we had to spend five hundred dollars of our newly-acquired fortunes to meet the liabilities which we had incurred at Speedwell. We paid these debts uncomplainingly, but the conviction settled deep into our hearts that we could not afford any longer to indulge in a city pastorate. Acting on this conviction, we shook the dust of Speedwell from our feet, and before the summer daisies whitened the meadows, we were away in search of the beautiful and the true where Nature woos the heart lovingly, and the eager masses cannot contradict her lessons of peace.

Would you like to be trusted, kindly reader, to peep behind the curtain with which we have heretofore veiled from the rude world's gaze the beauty and joy of our cottage home? Do you feel a curiosity to know whether the many hopes we had indulged were realized, and whether we found the peace, the opportunity for work, and the great reconciliation with God and man which we had expected?

We do not mean to tell that story in words, for experience has taught us that the world would rather be *lived for* than *talked to*, and we will try and tell the story of our joy in our lives, rather than by our words. If any blossoms spring along our pathway, or rich fruits ripen on our tree of life, these shall be our testimonies of joy, and your acceptance of the wisdom of our judgment in changing homes.

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